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# THE INDEPENDENT

No 2,924

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## Mortgage cuts will bring rise in prices

Hope of rate cut is clear sign of recovery

DIANE COYLE and PAUL WALLACE

The prospect of lower interest rates following the recent sharp rise in house prices is the clearest sign yet that a recovery in the housing market is under way for the first time in five years.

After years of gloom, Britain's 16 million home owners face the virtual certainty of lower borrowing costs and rising house prices.

The chances that the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, will cut base rates after his meeting with the Governor of the Bank of England, Eddie George, on Thursday were raised yesterday by news that manufacturing is in recession and inflationary pressures are vanishing.

At the same time a sharp rise in house prices last month gave the clearest sign so far of improved prospects.

Mr Clarke's scope for reducing borrowing costs was also helped by further signs of economic weakness in the US, increasing the likelihood that interest rates will fall across the Atlantic and elsewhere later this month.

London's financial markets regard a quarter-point reduction in the level of base rates to 6 per cent after the forthcoming monetary meeting as a racing certainty. The Bank is thought to be unlikely to object to a third reduction in four months even though Mr George advised delaying January's move.

Lower mortgage rates would almost certainly follow, helping boost the housing market further.

The Treasury said the Chancellor would make his decision on all the evidence. "It doesn't do to focus on one sector of the economy at the expense of others," a spokesman said.

Nevertheless, interest rate hopes took share prices higher yesterday, with the FT-SE 100 index ending just over 25 points higher at 3752.7.

House prices jumped 1.4 per cent in February according to the Nationwide building society's index. This took them to a level 0.9 per cent higher than a year earlier, the first time since

last April that prices have risen year-on-year.

The Halifax's index, due on Monday, is also expected to show an increase in prices in February.

"We cannot expect this kind of increase every month, but the housing market is definitely recovering," said Ian Shepherdson, a housing expert at HSBC Markets.

The Nationwide said the trend pointed to a "modest" recovery. A spokesman, Philip Williamson, said: "We are confident that recent signs of improvement will mark the beginning of a moderate but sustained recovery in the market."

A base rate cut would lead to further reductions in the cost of home loans, already at their lowest level for more than 30 years. The Nationwide raised the stakes in the mortgage war by cutting its standard variable mortgage rate to 6.99 per cent just over a week ago. Its competitors are under pressure to follow its example.

Separately, the influential monthly purchasing managers' survey of manufacturing showed industry moving into recession last month. It also reported a sharp fall in the prices index, to its lowest for more than three years. "The contents of the survey are extremely helpful to the Chancellor and make a rate cut odds-on," said Simon Briscoe, a City economist at Nikko Europe.

The purchasing managers' index of manufacturing activity fell below 50 - the dividing line between expansion and contraction - for the first time since November 1992.

In its biggest plunge for four years, the survey's prices index fell from 49.1 to 44.4, the lowest since January 1992. This raised hopes that manufacturers may soon be paying less for their inputs of materials.

The consumer goods industries, which make up almost one-third of manufacturing, were more buoyant than a depressed investment and intermediate goods sector. "The figures for the consumer sector were relatively good," said Peter Thomson, director-general of the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply. "The question is whether the rest of the manufacturing sector will follow."

The decline last month was centred in the investment and intermediate goods industries. Deteriorating order books in these sectors swamped a further small pick-up in consumer goods sector.

A further sign of weakness was that the employment index was below the 50 watershed, pointing to job cuts, for the second month running.

Fury at 'disgraceful and insulting' offer to family of woman killed searching for fire victims



Fleur Lombard, whose life has been judged worth £950, and (left) Kevin Lane, whose partner will receive no pension

## Blaze heroine Fleur's life is worth just £950

BARRIE CLEMENT Labour Editor

The parents of heroine Fleur Lombard, the first female firefighter to be killed on active duty in Britain, will get just £950 compensation for her death, the Independent has learned.

Last night Jane Lombard, Fleur's mother, still mourning the death of her daughter last month, was angered by the payment. "This is all very depressing. £950 is not much for a life," she said.

The 21-year-old female firefighter was killed when the roof of a Co-op store in Bristol collapsed as she went into the building to see if shoppers were trapped. Her family has set up a trust fund for the rehabilitation of firefighters in her name.

In a separate case, the common law wife of a part-time Gwent fireman, Kevin Lane, who died fighting a fire two days earlier, will receive no pension because although she was the mother of his 10-year-old son, she was not married to him. The wife, a colleague, Stephen Griffin, who died in the same blaze last month will receive full pension rights. Both men had entered a blazing house at Blaina in the misapprehension that a child was inside.

The Fire Brigades Union has protested to the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, over the "disgraceful and insulting" compensation offered to Mrs Lombard. In a letter to Mr Howard, Ken Cameron, leader of the union, registered his "extreme concern" about the deficiencies of the pension scheme which means only married spouses of firefighters killed on duty get payments.

Mr Cameron wrote: "We as a union have campaigned for many decades in order to have

the right of choice about our pension scheme. Individuals who daily risk their lives in order to protect the public are entitled to ensure their partners or other relatives benefit from a scheme to which they have contributed over their service."

He reminded the minister that a working party had been set up on the issue by the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council and that a decision by ministers was "long overdue". The compensation scheme, which is administered by the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire Brigades, recognises common law spouses. The partners of the two Gwent firemen will get lump sums of around £85,000 each.

Mr Cameron told the Independent: "The Prime Minister in the Commons paid his tribute and offered his sympathy to the families. He should now ensure that their nearest and dearest have access to justice and practical help." A spokeswoman for the Home Office said Mr Cameron would receive a full reply to his letter and that the Government was conducting a review of fire service pensions.



## Civil servants 'to be punished over Scott'

CHRIS BLACKHURST Westminster Correspondent

Ministers yesterday refused to rule-out disciplinary action against civil servants criticised in the Scott report on arms to Iraq and provoked a bitter Commons row.

They ignored repeated calls from the Opposition to make a statement on yesterday's disclosure in *The Independent* that officials are not in the clear over Scott. Labour MPs were incensed by a Government source saying that while ministers had had their trial and been acquitted - a reference to last Monday's narrow Commons victory in the Scott vote - civil servants had not.

The row erupted as John Marshall, the Tory MP Hendon South, disclosed he had threatened to rebel over Scott in the vote after last Monday's debate but saved the Government from a humiliating defeat because the Prime Minister had told him the

Ulster Unionists were "putting a pistol to his head".

In the Commons yesterday, Shadow public service spokesman Derek Foster, challenged junior trade and industry minister John Taylor, who was sitting opposite him in the chamber for a debate on the whistle-blowers' Bill, to explain the Government's position.

Mr Foster said Mr Taylor was from "one of the departments where civil servants are under threat of disciplinary action, and indeed dismissal" and was "in the best position" to make a statement.

He added: "With no minister taking responsibility, it would be shameful for the Government to try to off-load all responsibility for the Scott report on to civil servants." Mr Taylor said he would report Mr Foster's concerns to Ian Lang, President of the Board of Trade.

Mr Foster later sent a letter to Roger Freeman, the public

TURN TO PAGE 2

## Adams is granted visa for visit to US

COLIN BROWN and DONALD MACINTYRE

Gerry Adams, the Sinn Fein president, is to be given a visa for the United States so that he can attend the St Patrick's Day celebrations.

In a move, which will anger sections of the Tory party, President Bill Clinton decided to grant a visa to Mr Adams but to attach conditions which restrict him to a single entry and prevent him raising funds for Sinn Fein.

The decision was confirmed last night by US officials and the White House was due to make a formal announcement later. The officials said the conditions had been imposed as a gesture of condemnation of the IRA's decision to end its 17-month ceasefire. Downing Street would only say last night that the granting of a visa to Mr Adams was "a matter for the US government," which is consistent with the stance taken by the British government over the last two weeks.

This is in sharp contrast to the first granting of a US visa to the Sinn Fein president last year which the British government strongly and publicly opposed.

But British officials have been keen to point out that neither British nor Irish Ministers are at present meeting Sinn Fein and only officials may do so. That carries the clear implication that a meeting between Mr Adams and either the president or the vice-president, Al Gore, would be unacceptable in London.

The relatively "hands off" approach adopted by Whitehall could reflect a resignation in government circles to the prospect that Mr Adams would anyway be granted a visa. But it may also stem from the hope that the US will apply pressure on Mr Adams to secure a restoration of the ceasefire. It is that sense, Whitehall may believe that there may even be a benefit in the Sinn Fein president visiting the US.

Nevertheless, the granting of a visa, at a time when Mr Adams has conspicuously failed

to condemn the resumption of the IRA ceasefire, will anger not only the Ulster Unionists but also some prominent Tory backbenchers with an interest in Northern Ireland issues.

David Wills, the Tory MP for Spelthorne, who this week attacked the peace bid by John Major and John Bruton as "appeasement", said last night: "Adams will be going to New York with blood on his hands."

"There have been three deaths in London. He has not condemned the bombings. It raises questions about Clinton's judgement," Mr Wills said.

A ministerial source said: "The backbench will be extremely angry about this. The Government is not very happy with it. He may be banned from fund-raising in the States, but that's too late. The money has already fled from the States to Ireland."

The Government was consulted about the visa and is understood to have suggested that there should be conditions placed on it.

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WIN DAMON HILLS RENAULT SPIDER See page 22 for token

IN BRIEF

**Tougher penalties**  
The Lord Chief Justice signalled a tough new attitude to death row drivers with dramatic increases in the sentences of two convicted men. Page 6

**Italian shoot-out**  
The hunt for an Italian serial killer ended in an orgy of violence as the culprit killed two more people, holed up in a farmhouse with two hostages and, after a shoot-out, then killed himself. Page 9

**Today's weather**  
Cloudy with some rain and a hardy wind. Page 2



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Independent WEEKEND

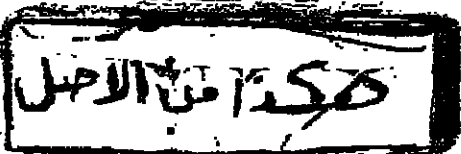
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**IN BRIEF**

**Animal exporter fined and banned**  
The animal exporter Roger Mills was fined £1,000 and banned from the road for a year yesterday after being found guilty of dangerous driving at a demonstration in the Essex port of Brightlingsea in May.

**Animal rights protesters**  
Sandra Lister suffered stomach injuries when she was hit by his Land Rover. Harwich magistrates suspended the sentence pending an appeal by Mills, 54, of Framlingham, Suffolk.

**Magazine code plan**  
A Commons Bill to curb explicit sexual content in teenage girls' magazines was given an unexpected second reading. The Government hopes publishers will agree a voluntary code before legislation is introduced.

**Footballer accused**  
The Manchester United footballer Nicky Butt appeared at the city's Crown Court yesterday headbutting a diner in a Chinese restaurant last October. Butt, 20, was bailed to appear for trial, expected to be in May.

**Double Dutch**  
The Plain English Campaign offered to help the Foreign Office cut gobbledegook from the Maastricht Treaty and make it easy to understand. The Dutch government condemned the treaty as a verbal hotchpotch.

**Toll verdict delayed**  
A Scottish sheriff reserved judgement on a legal challenge to tolls on the Skye Bridge. By decision day next Friday up to 200 drivers will have been charged with refusing to pay the £4.30 car toll.

**£1.3m on a plate**  
Eighty personalised car number plates sold for £1.3m at a London auction. One buyer paid more than £71,000 for NT CKY. NT NJA went for £21,780, NI XON for £37,480, 1 GW for £69,800 and 1 EM for £47,800.

**A new flavour**  
Austrian burgers will be on the lunch menu on Monday at Avon Valley school in Newbold, Warwickshire. Catering manager Yvonne Bruun said: "They have less fat than beef."

# Mackay threat on pension splitting could provoke backbench revolt

## Tories face Commons defeat over divorce

COLIN BROWN  
Chief Political Correspondent

The Government was warned it could face a Tory backbench rebellion and a defeat in the Commons if it seeks to overturn the vote in the Lords to give wives who divorce a share in their husband's pension.

The Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay of Clashfern, strongly hinted that the Government will seek to drop the measure for pensions splitting, which was forced into the Family Law Bill by Labour peers, and Tory rebels, including former ministers.

Aunt Winterton, one of the Tory MPs opposed to the Bill's main provisions to reform the divorce laws, said she would be prepared to vote for the amendment on pensions splitting to stay in the Bill when it goes to the Commons.

"I have a great deal of sympathy with the amendment. In this change to the divorce law ... the definition of the assets of the couple, the pension does figure very strongly."

"I think the Lord Chancellor should take to heart the decision in the Lords and say that, although this amendment may be flawed, they will do something about it, either by a separate piece of legislation or by something in this Bill."

Although Labour will vote for the Bill in the Commons, it will support the amendment leaving the Government facing the threat of having its water-tight majority wiped out by a backbench rebellion.

Lord Mackay said: "I doubt very much whether anyone is suggesting it [pensions splitting] can be done properly within the timetable of this Bill ... The issue is being passed to the Secretary of State for Social Security, Peter Lilley, to sort out, but yesterday his department stressed the problems may prove impossible to deal with in the Bill."

The practical difficulties include a three-year delay in putting pensions on the Government computer. The Department of Social Security also said pensions splitting would create a tax advantage, compared with married couples, for those who were divorced; that anomaly would undermine the Government's policy on the family.

The defeat has further undermined the Lord Chancellor's standing with Tory MPs, who are opposed to the main thrust of the Bill to reform the divorce laws. One Tory MP said: "The whole thing is a disaster. He ought to scrap it all."

There is no immediate threat to the Lord Chancellor's position, but the Bill is proving a thorn in the Government's side.

The Lord Chancellor yesterday said it would be better to deal with pensions splitting "properly by issuing a Green Paper to consider all these matters fully."

"The problems are very real and nothing can be done to bring this into effect ... for quite a considerable time."

"I would say it's better to have the legislative provisions clearly thought out before you put them in the statute book."

Frank Field, Labour chairman of the Commons Select Committee on Social Security, said the Lords made the right decision on the principle of pension splitting, in spite of the practical difficulties.

"There is the initial difficulty of computing a value to what pension entitlement up to the point of divorce is, and then splitting that and allowing some of those funds to be taken from the scheme," he said. "The Lords made the right decision, one of principle."



Pipers and drummers of the Atholl Highlanders, the Duke of Atholl's private army, march behind the coffin at the Duke's funeral at his ancestral home Blair Castle, near Pitlochry, Tayside, yesterday. Photograph: Drew Farrell

# Major's Scott vote hand revealed

COLIN BROWN  
Chief Political Correspondent

A Tory MP yesterday said he had voted to save the Government from a humiliating defeat in the Commons over the IRA deal because the Prime Minister had warned the Ulster Unionists were "putting a pistol to his head."

John Marshall, who had threatened to vote against the Government, changed his mind

after two meetings with Mr Major because the Prime Minister was being blackmailed by the Ulster Unionists to give concessions which Mr Major feared would have wrecked the Northern Ireland peace plans.

The Government won by one vote, and last night Labour warned it will challenge the Prime Minister over the disclosures by the Tory MP for Hendon South when Mr Major returns from the Far East.

Robin Cook, shadow Foreign Secretary, questioned how many more Tory MPs changed their minds over the Scott affair - avoiding the resignations of William Waldegrave and Sir Nicholas Lyell - because of warnings on Northern Ireland.

Mr Marshall said: "The Prime Minister did not go into the precise details of the Ulster Unionists' demands. But the mere fact they were metaphorically 'holding a pistol to his head' was sufficient."

His remarks last night revived Labour demands for the sackings of Mr Waldegrave, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, and Sir Nicholas, the Attorney General, who were heavily criticised in the Scott report. If the Government had lost the vote, the two ministers would have faced intense pressure from Tory backbenchers for their resignations.

Mr Marshall said: "In my view, those who made mistakes should have walked."

# Discipline threat for civil servants

FROM FRONT PAGE

service minister, accusing the Government of "moral cowardice" by not indicating whether disciplinary action was likely ahead of last Monday's Scott vote.

Downing Street said it was up to individual departments if they thought action was necessary. Those departments affected would only say that inquiries were still continuing.

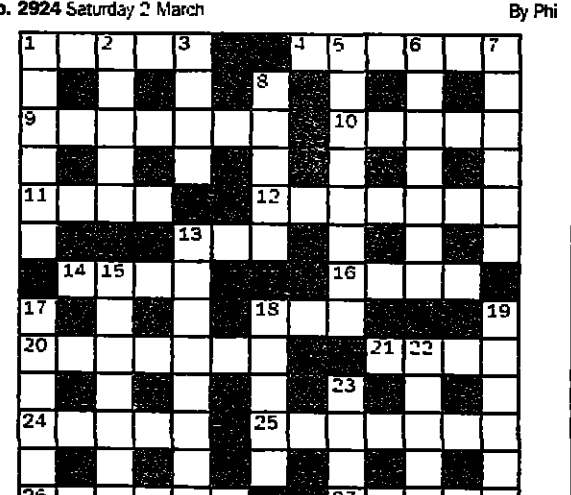
Civil service unions are bracing themselves for a full-scale row with the Government if officials are punished and ministers walk away scot-free.

Liz Symons, General Secretary of the First Division Association, which represents senior officials across Whitehall, has sent an urgent letter to Mr Freeman seeking assurances they will not be touched.

"The FDA believes it would be extraordinarily unfair if disciplinary action were taken against civil servants after ministers have effectively exonerated themselves," said Ms Symons.

She added: "Ministers cannot be allowed simply to walk away from the criticisms of them in the report, leaving civil servants to shoulder the burden of responsibility."

**concise crossword**  
No. 2924 Saturday 2 March By Phil



**ACROSS**

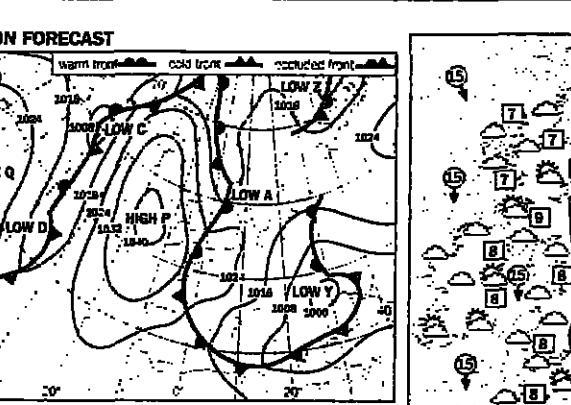
- Uses an electrical cleaner (5)
- Inborn (6)
- Inform (7)
- Animal (5)
- Vegetable (4)
- Former (3-4)
- Nearest star (3)
- Inform (4)
- Inform (on) (4)
- Notice (3)
- Injection device (7)
- Zero (4)
- Belgian city (5)
- Away from the shore (7)
- Provide opposition to (6)
- Not here (5)

**DOWN**

- Hugely (6)
- Witch (5)
- Period of reductions (4)
- Good behaviour required by rank (8)
- Saudi (7)
- Respect (6)
- Wood joint (5)
- Packed (8)
- Stuffy (7)
- Horse handler (6)
- Sound thinking (5)
- Amov (6)
- Make a speech (5)
- Bridge player (4)

**Weather forecast**

**NOON FORECAST**



**TODAY'S FORECAST:** Most of Scotland along with the Northern and Western Isles will stay dry and quite bright. However, plenty of cloud is likely with a moderate north-west wind. N. Ireland should also stay dry, but it will be cloudy with a northerly breeze. Most of England and Wales will be cloudy with a freshening northerly wind. Rain can be expected, but more especially to the east with many places in the west staying dry.

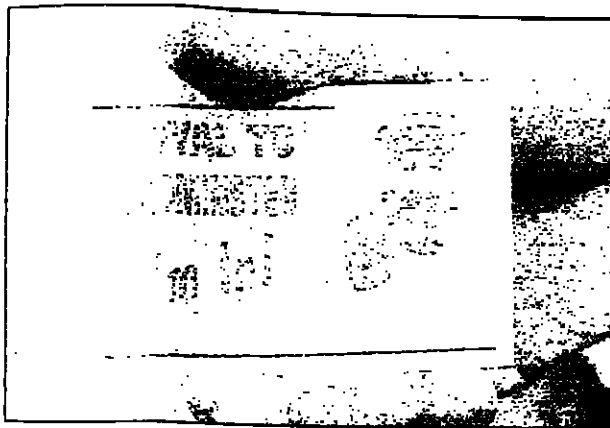
**OUTLOOK FOR NEXT FEW DAYS:** Much of the UK should be fine and dry during Sunday, and there will be some sunshine, more especially towards the west. However, thicker cloud in the southeast will produce a little rain. The early part of next week will be fine with some sunshine. However, frost may well return at night with patchy fog in the mornings.

**WORLD WEATHER**

Area	Temp	Wind	Cloud	Area	Temp	Wind	Cloud
London	12-18	SW	Partly	Paris	10-16	W	Cloudy
Birmingham	11-17	SW	Partly	Madrid	15-22	W	Sunny
Manchester	10-16	SW	Partly	Rome	14-20	W	Sunny
Newcastle	11-17	SW	Partly	Amsterdam	10-16	W	Cloudy
Cardiff	11-17	SW	Partly	Brussels	10-16	W	Cloudy
Belfast	11-17	SW	Partly	Frankfurt	11-17	W	Cloudy
Edinburgh	10-16	SW	Partly	Berlin	11-17	W	Cloudy
Glasgow	10-16	SW	Partly	Munich	11-17	W	Cloudy
Sheffield	11-17	SW	Partly	Vienna	11-17	W	Cloudy
Nottingham	11-17	SW	Partly	Zurich	11-17	W	Cloudy
Leeds	11-17	SW	Partly	Stockholm	8-14	W	Cloudy
Liverpool	11-17	SW	Partly	Helsinki	5-11	W	Cloudy
Cardiff	11-17	SW	Partly	Tallinn	5-11	W	Cloudy
Belfast	11-17	SW	Partly	Riga	5-11	W	Cloudy
Edinburgh	10-16	SW	Partly	Warsaw	8-14	W	Cloudy
Glasgow	10-16	SW	Partly	Budapest	10-16	W	Cloudy
Sheffield	11-17	SW	Partly	Prague	10-16	W	Cloudy
Nottingham	11-17	SW	Partly	Bratislava	10-16	W	Cloudy
Leeds	11-17	SW	Partly	Belgrade	10-16	W	Cloudy
Liverpool	11-17	SW	Partly	Sofia	10-16	W	Cloudy
Cardiff	11-17	SW	Partly	Thessalonika	10-16	W	Cloudy
Belfast	11-17	SW	Partly	Istanbul	10-16	W	Cloudy
Edinburgh	10-16	SW	Partly	Ankara	10-16	W	Cloudy
Glasgow	10-16	SW	Partly	Nicosia	10-16	W	Cloudy
Sheffield	11-17	SW	Partly	Larnaca	10-16	W	Cloudy
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Nottingham	11-17	SW	Partly	Limassol	10-16	W	Cloudy
Leeds	11-17	SW	Partly	Heraklion	10-16	W	Cloudy
Liverpool	11-17	SW	Partly	Thessalonika	10-16	W	Cloudy
Cardiff	11-17	SW	Partly	Istanbul	10-16	W	Cloudy
Belfast	11-17	SW	Partly	Ankara	10-16	W	Cloudy
Edinburgh	10-16	SW	Partly	Nicosia	10-16	W	Cloudy
Glasgow	10-16	SW	Partly	Larnaca	10-16	W	Cloudy
Sheffield	11-17	SW	Partly	Limassol	10-16	W	Cloudy
Nottingham	11-17	SW	Partly	Heraklion	10-16	W	Cloudy
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Leeds	11-17	SW	Partly	Ankara	10-16	W	Cloudy
Liverpool	11-17	SW	Partly	Nicosia	10-16	W	Cloudy
Cardiff	11-17						



# Leominster's traders play the loyalty card in attempt to trump out-of-town supermarket



RICHARD SMITH

More than 60 shopkeepers in an ancient Hereford and Worcester market town are fighting back against the large out-of-town supermarket they claim has badly hit their takings.

Traders in the town, which has a population of 10,000, have banded together to launch their own loyalty card scheme offering gifts and discounts of up to 25 per cent for shoppers using the town centre.

The "Loyal To Leominster" campaign has been organised by Graham Hurley, a butcher, to lure back shoppers from Safeway's out-of-town store, which opened nearly four years ago.

A recent survey by the local Chamber of Commerce revealed that 35 shops in the town centre were empty and six houses had been converted into houses. Two town-centre supermarkets have closed, while three garages, a petrol station and a pub are also empty.

"Safeway's really knocked the town centre for six and we have been wallowing in self-pity ever since," said Mr Hurley, 45, who owns a specialist pork butcher's shop. "A lot of small retailers closed down... It's too easy to park up at Safeway, do all your shopping and forget about the town centre."

"My turnover went down by 33 per cent overnight and although there has been a gradual

recovery its nowhere near back to the previous levels."

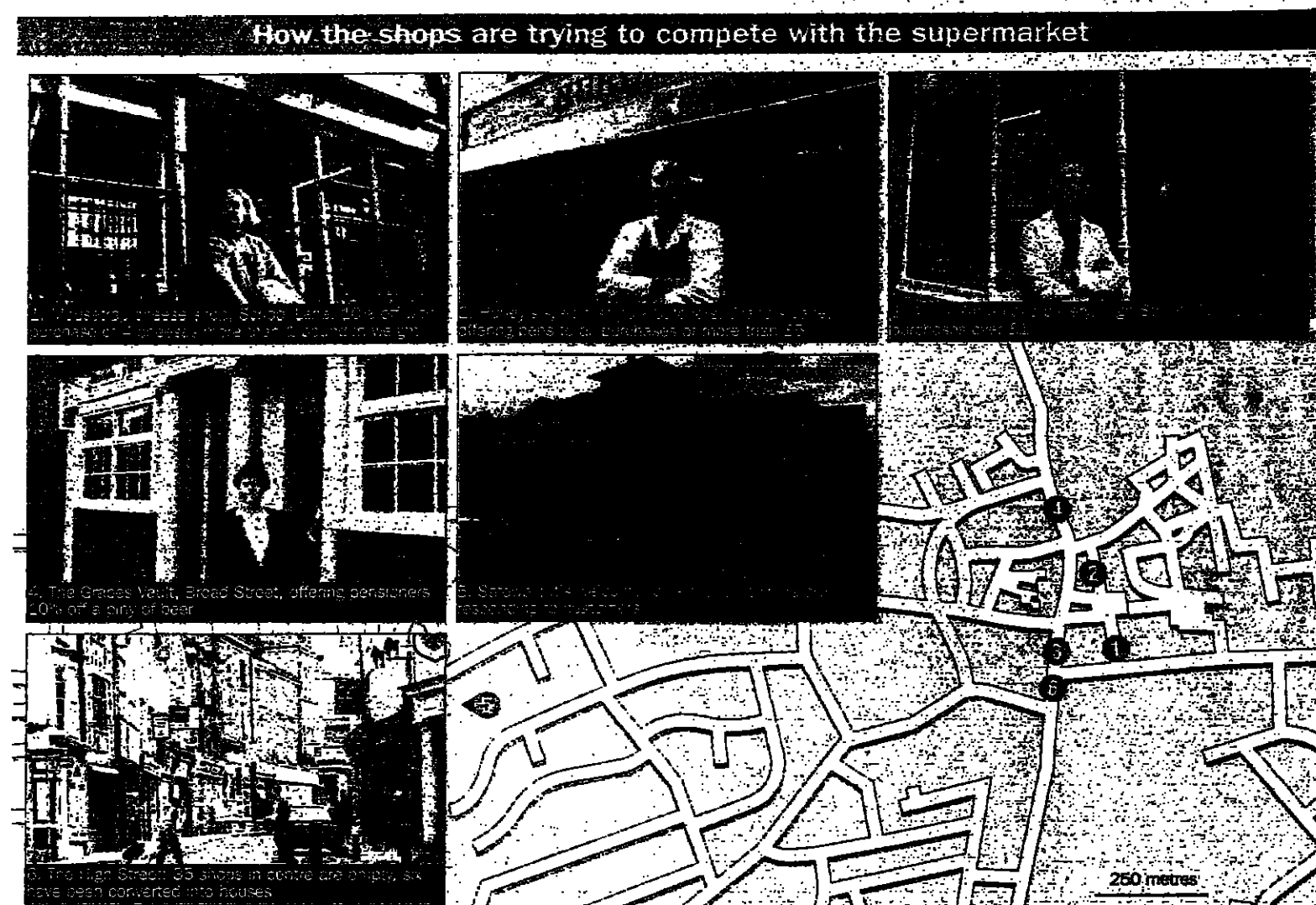
He added: "This will show people that shopkeepers in Leominster are not just a bunch of groaners. Although the supermarkets are clever at their job they cannot compete with the discounts we are offering."

The shops have spent £800 printing 10,000 membership cards. Every home in the town has been sent a leaflet with a picture of Lord Kitchener pointing a finger and asking: "Are you loyal to Leominster?"

Joining the scheme will be free and shoppers will be entitled to a wide range of cash discounts from local shops, building societies and insurance brokers. For instance, Ann's Pat-a-Cake bakery is offering 10 per cent off all purchases over £1 and there are similar discounts on children's summer clothes at Cloudy Two Shoes, the Olive Branch restaurant, meals at the Talbot Hotel, and shoes costing more than £20 at Freeman Hardy and Willis.

Monica Todd, president of the Chamber of Commerce and an insurance broker, said: "It's a brilliant idea - we have got to take on the supermarket giants if we are going to survive. There are around 100 shops in the town and the main reason so many are empty is the success of Safeway and the spiralling cost of business rates."

"The whole character of the town has changed - apart from Market Day, there isn't a buzz about the place any more because people are not coming here. This should certainly help to revitalise Leominster. The alternative is... to just give in."



How the shops are trying to compete with the supermarket

town has changed - apart from Market Day, there isn't a buzz about the place any more because people are not coming here. This should certainly help to revitalise Leominster. The alternative is... to just give in."

death when the centre goes. "It's one of those rolling balls - the less shops that are open the fewer people will come into town. It isn't much fun wandering round a town where half the shops are empty."

A Safeway spokesman said: "The important thing about our store is that ultimately it recaptures trade that was being lost to Hereford... Its very welcome to hear that people in Leominster are responding to customers."

	1990	1995 (est)	1990	1995 (est)
Single outlets	69.6	72.5	16.4	13.1
Small multiples	16.3	14.0	7.8	6.2
Large multiples	13.5	14.5	74.0	80.7

	1990	1995	Change 1990-95
Butchers	17,044	15,150	-11%
Green grocers	14,333	12,400	-14%
Bakers	6,856	5,500	-19%
Fishmongers	2,974	2,050	-31%

Source: Retailing survey, 1995

## Bailiffs advance on road protest

Seventeen people were arrested yesterday as bailiffs continued to clear the largest protest camp blocking the route of the Newbury bypass.

Police said the arrests were for obstruction and aggravated trespass as protesters, some in tree-houses, offered resistance. Thames Valley police said: "The protesters have been putting up quite a struggle."

Police moved into the "Pie Village" site in Snelsmore Common, Berkshire, the biggest of more than 20 camps on the route, early on Thursday. There were 13 arrests on Thursday and several people were trampled underfoot in clashes on the ground between demonstrators and police horses.

The police presence, was maintained overnight to prevent other protesters from joining those still in the trees and yesterday an excavator cleared a path to the treehouses. Bailiffs then went up in cranes known as cherry pickers to bring down the tree dwellers. One bailiff was repeatedly showered with urine during efforts to clear lower branches from a tree. Police said: "A woman in the tree had a bucket of urine and kept putting a stick in it then shaking it at the bailiff as he tried to climb the tree. But he carried on regardless."

Pete Foulding, a tunnel expert, had confirmed that a mass of tunnels beneath the camp was clear, police said.

Police prison vans filled up as tension remained high during the day. At least one protester appeared to have been arrested for assault. Fellow demonstrators accused police of assaulting the protester.

Eight of the 13 arrested on Thursday have been charged with obstruction and aggravated trespass and given bail. One was released, two released after caution, one bailed to return to a police station and one remained in custody.

## Fresh slicks raise fears of deliberate oil dumping

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR

At least two other oil slicks have been reported in the sea near the site of the *Sea Empress* spill, raising fears that other ships may be using the disaster to dump oil deliberately.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds yesterday said that oiled birds were being picked up in Rhyl, north Wales, too far away to have been affected by the *Sea Empress*. There has also been a spill on the North Devon coast which appears not to have come from the *Empress*.

Members of the RSPB monitoring scheme had also seen a slick on the Merioneth coast in north-west Wales, and another in Carmarthen Bay, site of the initial problem, neither of which were from the *Empress*.

Chris Harbard, spokesman for the RSPB, said yesterday: "We have picked up several common scoters near Rhyl and on the North Devon coast birds have been in oil which appears different from that of the *Empress*."

He said that ships coming to Britain were supposed to clear their oil bilges in port but that it was cheaper and quicker for them to do so while at sea. "This happens more often in the winter when the nights are longer because the ships do it under cover of darkness."

The Marine Control Pollution Unit confirmed the existence of at least two other slicks, but was unable to confirm their origin. A spokesman said: "We have no evidence that masters are discharging oil illegally on purpose."

Meanwhile, Tony Blair, the Labour leader, on a St David's Day visit to Wales to talk about plans for a Welsh Assembly, joined the Pembroke MP Nick Ainger to meet teams involved in the clean-up operation.

At the RSPCA emergency hospital in Milford Haven he was shown oiled seabirds being fed and washed. So far more than 2,600 have been recovered but 1,500 have died.

Mr Blair said: "It is absolutely essential that we take steps to ensure that this never happens again."

He said that recommendations made by Lord Donaldson in the wake of the *Broer* spill had not been implemented by the government.

Animal welfare groups involved in rescue operations will be able to claim compensation from the ship's insurers, the Government said last night.

## Anti-Nazis picket jazz gig by Mussolini's son

PAUL FIELD

A jazz concert by Mussolini's son Romano, organised by Fascist sympathisers, was expected to be picketed last night by Anti-Nazi League protesters.

The black-tie event at the Marriott Hotel, in Grosvenor Square, central London, was sponsored by an accommodation agency whose owners have links with the far right in Italy and the United Kingdom.

Massimo Morsello and Roberto Fiore, who run the Kensington-based agency Meeting Point, agreed to organise the concert because of their adoration for Il Duce. The concert, given by Romano Mussolini, a pianist, and his quartet, was expected to attract an audience of neo-Fascists, despite his own non-political reputation.

Mr Morsello, who keeps a

bust of Mussolini on his desk but has never heard Romano play, claimed he was approached by the pianist's representatives because of his business expertise. He stressed that he expected Italian jazz enthusiasts to attend but admitted: "Our main interest is that we are obviously Fascist, we are open about that and we have a weakness for his father."

Both Mr Morsello and Mr Fiore were active in Italian far-right politics in the early 1980s. The latter was a member of Terza Posizione, the political wing of the Armed Revolutionary Nuclei, which claimed responsibility for the 1985 bombing of Bologna railway station which left 85 people dead and 200 injured.

Mr Fiore and Mr Morsello were sentenced in absentia to nine and ten years in jail for subversive associations and being

members of an armed gang, although both men, who are 37, still proclaim their innocence. Romano Mussolini, 69, performed in public for the first time in 1956, has appeared in most European countries and played with Chet Baker. He made his London debut at the Soho Jazz Festival in 1991.

His daughter Alessandra, 35, is an Italian MP for the neo-Fascist Alleanza Nazionale. His daughter by his second marriage Rachele, 21, a sociology student, is competing in the 1996 Miss Italy contest.

Last Thursday Glyn Ford, MEP for Greater Manchester East, wrote to the hotel, urging the general manager, Franz Fersck, to cancel the booking.

However, a hotel spokeswoman, Elaine Ellis, said it was not the hotel's normal policy to accept or reject bookings on any basis other than availability.

## Police in shoot-out with gang

Seven people were arrested and one was wounded when armed police ambushed a gang who had hijacked a security van in London yesterday.

Flying Squad officers had apparently been lying in wait for the van at the warehouse in Fulham, south-west London, following an armed robbery in Knightsbridge.

Police, wearing bullet-proof vests and carrying MP5 carbine machine pistols, fired up to seven shots in after stopping the suspect van.

A Scotland Yard spokeswoman described how a security van containing a large amount of cash had been making a delivery in the Knightsbridge area when it was hijacked by four armed men on two motorcycles.

The van was taken, with the guards inside, about four miles away to the derelict warehouse. "As a result of the action of one of the suspects a number of shots were fired by the police," she said. "One of the suspects was slightly wounded with a grazed wrist."

Five men were arrested at the scene and another was picked up nearby. The seventh - a woman - was arrested later. The guards who were taken hostage were not hurt.

Police recovered the stolen cash as well as a loaded revolver, masks and radios. An inquiry is being carried out by the Complaints Investigatory Bureau - standard procedure when police open fire.

## Squatter estate agency opens

Britain's newest estate agent opened yesterday with some unique property descriptions.

The Squatter Estate Agents was opened in a corner shop in Brighton by the campaign group Justice. Photographs of properties were displayed with comments such as "Easy to get in. Good condition. Boun empty for a long time" and "Clean, nice but small. Alarmed with Chubb and Yale locks".

Justice claims Brighton has

the highest percentage of homelessness in the country. "While bits of paper are shuffled about and so-called urgent meetings waste hours, nothing ever seems to be done, so one practical solution is to squat," reads a publicity leaflet at the estate agent.

But not all has gone smoothly for the agency, the council served it with an affidavit to face court eviction proceedings on Monday. At the "grand opening" of the shop, one of the

group, Paul, said: "I wish the council would house people quicker than they exist people." Clive Buxton, a solicitor, deplored the publicity being given to the resort. "We are at a conference and tourist town and... this is not doing it much good," he said.

But Paul denied people were being encouraged to break the law. "You either starve and die on the street or you find somewhere to live," he said.



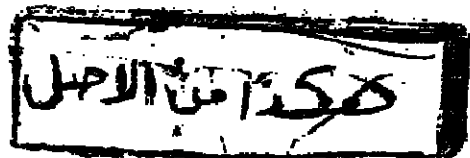
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## news

# Whistle-blowers' Bill wins support of MPs

NICHOLAS TIMMINS  
Public Policy Editor

A Bill to protect individuals who blow the whistle on crime or malpractice at work cleared its first Commons hurdle by 118 votes to nil yesterday – despite the Government making plain its opposition.

The Bill appeared to have got through to its committee stage, however, because of an error by

Government whips who failed to ensure it was talked out after John Taylor, the junior trade and industry minister, told MPs it represented "neither a practical or desirable way forward".

Without Government backing, the Bill is set to fail despite cross-party support and the hopes that it would be given a fair wind in the wake of the Savitt report and commitments to more open government.

The Bill would provide some protection for those who exposed serious malpractice at work in both the public and private sectors, providing they raised the issue internally first, could convince a court they were acting in the public interest, and did not seek financial gain from their actions. Individuals could seek injunctions preventing reprisals, while the £11,000 limit on compensation

for unfair dismissal in such circumstances would be lifted.

Mr Taylor told MPs that "in a vast range of the public service" effective procedures for the "undoubtedly preferable option" of internal whistle-blowing already existed. The Bill was therefore unnecessary. He also maintained – to flat denials from the Bill's sponsors, who included Iain Duncan-Smith, the Conservative MP for Chingford

– that it would impose "a considerable burden on industry".

Mr Duncan-Smith said the Bill was "not about regulation". It simply encouraged best practice, ensuring companies did not "try to cut corners where they shouldn't".

Don Touhy, Labour MP for Islington, the Bill's originator, said there were many examples, from the Zeebrugge ferry disaster to the Piper Alpha plat-

form explosion, in which lives had been lost where employees had kept quiet about malpractice for fear of losing their jobs. Several Conservatives spoke against the Bill claiming it would be a "whingers' charter" but Anthony Coombs, the Wyre Forest MP, said it was a "valuable measure" which would protect the individual against large enterprise and the state. "I believe that is a very sound

conservative principle." Alan Howarth, who defected to Labour last year, said a whistle-blower at Matrix Churchill had provided evidence to Whitehall that the firm's equipment was being used to make shell cases, and "the legal protection for responsible whistle-blowers that this Bill provides would be a valuable additional protection to our liberties and to public safety".

Mr Taylor said he applauded Mr Touhy's motives, but the Bill would be very uncertain in its effect, leaving both employees and employers unsure what would constitute public interest.

After the vote, Mr Touhy argued that it was "significant" in the wake of the Savitt report that the Government had "wisely decided not to test this measure by putting its supporters through the lobby".

## Hewitt affair returns to haunt Diana

LOUISE JURY

The Prince of Wales headed off to the ski slopes of Klosters this weekend as the Princess of Wales was facing embarrassment from her former lover the ex-Army captain James Hewitt, who has given his first television interview on their affair.

News of the potentially explosive revelations from Mr Hewitt came as lawyers acting for the Prince and Princess attempted quiet diplomacy over their divorce negotiations.

A royal war of words broke out on Wednesday after the Princess announced that she had had a private meeting with her husband that afternoon and agreed to end the marriage.

She said they had agreed she would take the title Diana, Princess of Wales, and continue to live at Kensington Palace. But Buckingham Palace expressed surprise and said all details remained to be settled.

The contradictory statements prompted a tough letter from Anthony Julius, the Princess's solicitor, to Fiona Shackleton at Furrer and Co, who acts for the Prince. Mr Julius warned: "If we cannot rely on agreements that have been made, it would be unsafe to continue negotiations."

Late yesterday, Jane Atkinson, the Princess's press adviser, said a response had been received and Mr Julius was now considering the situation. But she said: "We are giving no information about it at all. The

discussions now between the lawyers are absolutely confidential." She said the Princess, who pulled out of an engagement on Thursday in distress, had recovered her spirits.

A spokeswoman for the Prince's solicitor, Fiona Shackleton, said she had nothing to say – a view repeated by Buckingham Palace.

The silence left royal watchers with the more gossipy revelation that Mr Hewitt, the 37-year-old former Army captain, has given a filmed interview to the journalist Anna Pasternak, who wrote a much-debated book about his relations with the Princess.

Sebastian Rich, 42, a former ITN cameraman, was named as the film crew for the kiss-and-tell footage in which Mr Hewitt reportedly answers 130 questions about every aspect of his royal liaison. Miss Pasternak, 29, said: "Mr Hewitt is very frank, honest and candid about their physical relationship in the same way as the Princess was in her *Panorama* interview."

Broadcasting experts estimated the film could fetch a seven-figure sum with worldwide interest, heightened by the royal divorce. The London office of the American network CBS News said: "There was a scramble for Diana's *Panorama* interview and this is undoubtedly going to be the same."

In her interview, the Princess said she had "adored" Mr Hewitt, "but I was very let down".



Up on the roof: Dr Robert Anderson, director of the British Museum, in front of the domed Reading Room

Photograph Philip Meech

## Museum wins £30m lottery grant for new roof

REBECCA FOWLER

The British Museum will receive £30m lottery money towards a new glass roof for the Great Court, designed by Sir Norman Foster, which will be opened for the first time in 150 years for the millennium.

The two and a half-acre site

at the centre of the museum, which receives 6 million visitors a year, will be transformed into a piazza, with galleries, restaurants and rest areas. It includes the Round Reading Room, which will be opened to the public for the first time.

Dr Robert Anderson, director of the museum, said: "The

trustees and staff are delighted we can make a very significant contribution to the celebration of the new millennium."

He added: "The Great Court will enhance the British Museum's position as one of the leading international museums and it will help us deal with major problems of overcrowding."

The idea of a glass roof for the courtyard, which formed part of the original building of the 1820s, was first mooted in 1852, using the same technology as the Crystal Palace.

When the British Library, based in the Round Reading Room where Karl Marx once studied, announced three years

ago it was going to move to St Pancras, the scheme was revived, with the intention of transforming the inner courtyard into the focus of the building, as it was originally intended.

The total cost of the renovations, which will begin in 1998, will be £72m. The museum has raised £21m independently.

## Meat firm seeks to overturn BSE ban

CHARLES ARTHUR  
Science Correspondent

A meat processing company is challenging the Government's ban on the use of cows' spines in mechanically recovered meat, claiming it is unlawful.

If Great Harwood Food Products, of Great Harwood in Lancashire, wins the case, food companies could once more include ground-up cattle bones in meat products.

This may renew fears that mad cow disease, or BSE, could be transmitted to humans.

The ban on the use of cows' brains, skulls and spines in mechanically recovered meat was introduced last November, in the wake of fears that BSE-infected tissue could pass into food. At the time, the agriculture minister Douglas Hogg said the measure was "designed to protect public health from any remote theoretical risk from BSE".

Great Harwood Food Products, which produces mechanically "removed" meat for burgers, pies, sausages, soups and other products, says the new controls pose a serious threat to its business. It describes the ban as "disproportionate, irrational and unreasonable" and therefore unlawful under both domestic and European law.

The company is seeking a judicial review, arguing that ministers were trespassing on an area exclusively covered by EU rules. No date has yet been set for the hearing.

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مکان العمل



## Motorways will grind to a halt in 20 years

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR  
Transport Correspondent

Large sections of the motorway and trunk road network will be severely congested at both peak and off-peak times in 20 years time, according to maps produced by the Department of Transport and released yesterday by the RAC.

The maps show that at present there are only a few "hotspots", such as the M25 and parts of the road network around Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds.

Using Department of Transport projections which suggest traffic growth of between 83 and 142 per cent from the late 1980s, the maps suggest that by the year 2015 - even on low traffic growth estimates - large parts of the motorway network in the South-east will experience long periods of congestion.

All strategic routes, the whole of the South-west and large areas of the Midlands and the North will have severe congestion problems.

The maps are based on the assumption that there will be no road improvements beyond those now under construction, such as the Newbury bypass and the M11 link roads.

The roads programme has been hit badly by the past two budgets, with a total cut of over a quarter from the 1994/95 peak. No new big starts are scheduled for the forthcoming year because of overspending on past schemes and a reduction in the money available.

The RAC says that the maps show that the present lack of a coherent government policy on transport has disastrous long-term consequences. Edmund King, campaigns manager of the RAC, said: "We have been stuck without a long-term transport policy for years. The Government has not come up with any idea on what to do about congestion, but it has been happy to slash the roads programme. This just doesn't add up." Mr King says the details contained in the maps "condemn the motorist to at least 10 years of chaos and increasingly severe congestion".

The maps will be seized upon by both sides of the transport debate as evidence of failed policy. The environmentalists argue that even with massive spending on roads there would be little improvement as the congestion crisis is growing faster than any feasible road programme Britain could afford.

Roger Higman, a transport campaigner with Friends of the Earth, said: "This just shows that we need policies to stem the growth in traffic, not to try to accommodate it by concreting over large sections of Britain."

The pro-roads lobby suggests, however, that the roads programme must be reinstated to its former levels. Mark Glover, spokesman for the British Roads Federation, said: "Unless we are prepared to increase road capacity, users will have to pay a massive cost in terms of congestion."



By royal appointment: Canon Marion Mingins reflecting on her new honorary title yesterday Photograph: Findlay Kember

## Female chaplain gets royal seal

JOJO MOYES

In a move that is being seen as a sign of approval of the ordination of women priests, the Queen has appointed the first female Church of England royal chaplain.

Canon Marion Mingins will join 34 men already holding the honorary title, which involves taking private services for the Royal Family at the royal chapel in St James's Palace.

"I have not been privy to the extent the Queen made the running on my appointment, but the fact remains she is the supreme governor of the Church of England," said Canon Mingins yesterday.

"In appointing a woman as royal chaplain it appears to be a vote of confidence in the ordination of women which is why I am particularly pleased."

Canon Mingins, 43, was among the first women to be ordained as a Church of England deacon when she was given the title at Southwark Cathedral in 1987.

She was ordained a full priest in April 1994, soon after the church changed its rules to allow women priests, and for the last five years has been a residential canon at St Edmundsbury Cathedral, in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, where the bishop, the Right Rev John Dennis, said the appointment was "a very great tribute to her and the quality of her ministry".

The former social worker from Tyneside said she was delighted with her appointment to the principally ceremonial post, which dates back to the Middle Ages.

"Many areas of ministerial responsibility in the church which had been previously closed to women are now opening up to them and this is just the latest example," she said, adding: "The appointment is a considerable personal honour."

A Buckingham Palace spokesman said the Queen had a woman royal chaplain in the Church of Scotland, but that Canon Mingins was the first in the Church of England.

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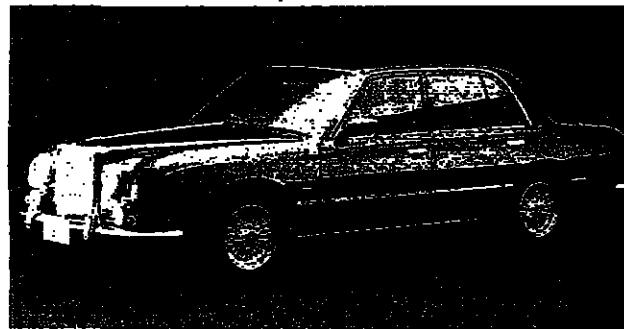
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## Rolls unfazed by imitation model

ROS WYNNE-JONES

The battle of the Rollers has begun. Representing Britain is the hand-built 1973 Silver Shadow with a walnut veneer dashboard and a 6.7-litre engine. Flying the flag for Japan is the 1996 Mitsubishi Galus, a 2-litre dead ringer for the English classic, minus the Spirit of Ecstasy statuette. The brand new Japanese version, which translates literally as "doing it my way", costs slightly less than the second-hand original.

Rolls-Royce, due to launch three new models at next week's Geneva Motor Show, is unfazed by the competition. The car, the ultimate choice for Lady Penelope in the Seventies television show *Thunderbirds*, is just as popular in the Nineties with young celebrity owners ranging from Noel Gallagher of Oasis to the boys in *Take That*. "All we would be concerned about was if someone was using our trademarks," said a spokeswoman for Rolls-Royce. "Bodywork is not a trademark and they have not used the Spirit of Ecstasy as far as we are aware, so although we are looking into the matter we are not too worried."

The company's cool confidence is borne out by the loyalty of its customers. The novelist Dame Barbara Cartland, who owned the very first white Silver Shadow, built especially for her in the 1960s, was horrified to hear the Japanese had dared launch a rival. "This is very worrying," she said yesterday. "I am very concerned about British cars - you just don't see them on the roads nowadays. I would never buy a Japanese car and certainly not a cheap imitation of a Rolls-Royce. It's disgraceful."

Jim Bowen, the comedian, found there was nothing funny about a foreign imitation of his beloved Silver Shadow. "You've only got to sit in a Rolls-Royce to know it can't be copied cheaply. It must be made of tin, with an MFI interior."

"It's a ludicrous idea. You can buy an original from 1975 for less than the price of the imitation, so what's the point?"

## Bridgewater case man's suicide bid

One of the men convicted of the murder of the newspaper boy Carl Bridgewater has tried to commit suicide after hearing that hopes of a new appeal had been dashed, it was disclosed yesterday.

Francis Hickey, 41, was treated in the hospital wing of Long Lartin prison, near Evesham, Worcestershire, after slashing his wrists on Thursday.

He had been found covered in blood in his cell. A Prison Service spokesman said the attempt appeared to be "a determined effort". Although the injuries were serious, they were not life-threatening.

Hickey, his 33-year-old cousin Michael, and James Robinson, 61, are serving life sentences for the murder of 13-year-old Carl

in 1978 in Stourbridge, West Midlands.

The three have protested their innocence since their conviction and supporters and relatives claim there is now fresh evidence which could cast doubt on the conviction.

But Home Office ministers made it clear on Wednesday that, although they would look at any new evidence, the feeling was that the case would not be referred back to appeal.

Hickey's solicitor, James Nichol, said he could not comment on the suicide attempt until he had further details.

He said the prisoners' legal team had given the Home Office 28 days to respond to new evidence or solicitors would seek a judicial review.

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PHILIPS



## news

# 'Unduly lenient' death-crash jail terms increased

The Lord Chief Justice yesterday signalled a tough new attitude to death-crash drivers with dramatic increases in the sentences of two men.

Lord Taylor of Gossforth, sitting in the Court of Appeal with Mr Justice Curtis and Mr Justice Gage, ruled that the four-and-a-half-year term imposed on a man who ran over and killed a 70-year-old while trying to steal his car was "unduly lenient". They ordered that Paul Daves, 21, of Hartlepool, in Cleveland, should serve six years - the "least" sentence that could be imposed.

The judges then increased the sentence of Anthony Jackson, 24, of Holmewood in Bradford, West Yorkshire, from three years to five years after they heard he had killed a teacher while driving at speed the wrong way down a one-way street.

Both cases had been referred to the court for review by the Attorney General, Sir Nicholas Lyell, after the original sentences caused a wave of anger among relatives and the local communities.

Gary Waller, Tory MP for Keighley, said after the second

hearing that the sentence imposed by Bradford Crown Court failed to take into account the fact that Parliament has decided on a 10-year maximum sentence for cases of this kind.

Jackson pleaded guilty in September 1995 to causing death by dangerous driving after he ran down John Lund, 42, who was out walking his dog near his home in Bradford.

Lord Taylor said Jackson, who had no driving licence or insurance, had turned off a main road at high speed into a narrow lane through "No Entry" signs where he struck Mr Lund and carried on without stopping. He then tried to make his car appear as if it had been stolen by smashing the steering lock and ignition, but confessed to police after his friends said they would report him.

Lord Taylor said: "The Attorney General is concerned about the level of sentence in this case. There is public concern generally about death by dangerous driving."

Daves pleaded guilty to manslaughter and aggravated vehicle taking at Teesside Crown Court. Lord Taylor said the

facts of the case were "disturbing". An elderly couple had returned from a dance club to their home in Hartlepool, and the husband, Robert Incliffe, had left his car running in the driveway to help his wife into the car and during his attempts to reverse out of the drive ran over Mr Incliffe and killed him. He drove off at speed, leaving Mr Incliffe in the road, and later abandoned the vehicle.

Daves, who had previous convictions for shoplifting, taking vehicles, obstructing police and threatening behaviour, was driving while disqualified.

A police chief later criticised the "lenient sentence" given by the Court of Appeal to Daves. Detective Chief Inspector Ray Mallon, who led the inquiry into the death, said: "In my view, the Court of Appeal paid no more than lip service to public opinion in relation to this crime."

"This is a disgraceful sentence for a crime as serious as this. It is another example of where the courts have let the public down. It seems the courts, on an extremely regular basis, fail to protect the public."



Dummy run: A waxwork of the tenor Luciano Pavarotti being delivered to the Royal College of Music, south-west London, for last night's Classic CD awards. The awards are based on voting by the readers of Classic CD magazine. Photograph: Philip Meech

## Safety row as police issued with CS spray

JASON BENNETT  
Crime Correspondent

The police are to use CS spray canisters containing a solvent that can cause serious injury, rather than wait for a safer alternative to be developed. The disclosure came as some 2,300 officers in 16 forces throughout England and Wales were issued yesterday with the hand-held sprays.

A leaked document said that chief constables were not prepared to wait until a "safe" solvent - used as propellant in the canisters - had been found. The present solvent has been shown to cause "skin reddening, scaling and blistering".

An instructor with the Metropolitan Police, who collapsed after being sprayed during pre-trials last June, suffered 50 per cent burns to an eye and burns to the forehead.

The confidential Association of Chief Police Officers' document acknowledged that there were "possible health risks" involved in using the devices, but warned that an alternative could take many months or up to two years to develop.

Police chiefs argued yesterday that they had to "balance" the potential dangers of the spray with the protection it gave their officers from violent offenders.

Liberty, the civil rights group, called for more testing and an immediate halt to the six-month trials. "It is clear from the ACPO's research that the spray causes severe eye and facial injuries," said their director, John Wadham.

Lawyers believe any injuries caused during arrests could lead to a flood of compensation claims. The Metropolitan Police instructor, who needed hospital treatment, is already attempting to sue for damages, along with a constable and retired sergeant from Surrey, for injuries they say were the

result of being sprayed with CS. Surrey and Hertfordshire police have already withdrawn from the trials because of safety fears.

The ACPO document, circulated to forces on 4 January, but leaked to the *Yorkshire Post* newspaper, says there are two options: "Firstly to await the development of a new product with a 'safe' solvent... secondly, to go ahead with the trials using the CS with [the solvent] MIBK as presently held by forces, in the knowledge of the possible health risks that have been identified."

It explained that the wait for a new "safe" product may take up to two years. "Chief constables may not feel that they are prepared to wait this long for a less than lethal option to protect officers," the document added, acknowledging that less research had been carried out on the sprays than was previously understood by ACPO.

Tony Burden, chief constable of Gwent and chairman of the association's working group on CS sprays, said yesterday: "There may be some side effects such as flaking of the skin, but this has to be balanced against the threat faced by police officers from violent persons especially those armed with weapons such as knives."

"Police officers should not be expected to be targets of such levels of violence and deserve to be properly protected."

Research has showed that up to 12 per cent of people could be unaffected by the spray. They include those who have been drinking, taking drugs or are being aggressive.

Officers have been issued with guidance on procedures to adopt once the spray has been used. Those arrested will be seen by a medical examiner and will be provided with an information sheet detailing possible side-effects on release.

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## Mail staff to deliver new wood for Dales

NIGEL BURNHAM

The Yorkshire Dales national park yesterday announced that a new wood, named after its sponsor, the Royal Mail, is to be planted beside the Pennine Way and the River Aire at Airedale in Malhamdale, near Skipton.

Royal Mail Wood will comprise 750 broad-leaved trees, including ash, oak and rowan, paid for out of £10,000 raised by staff of Royal Mail North East.

The project, launched with the planting of the first tree next Wednesday, will be the first wood to be planted under sponsorship in the national park.

Royal Mail managers and staff will be involved in the work, helping to prepare footpaths, erecting foot bridges and organising work parties to co-ordinate the planting of the one-acre wood.

A spokesman dismissed criticism of the wood's name and objections from local conservationists, who told the national park: "Corporate sponsorship and national parks do not mix."

"There's nothing wrong with the name," said the spokesman. "We're not talking about Sherwood Forest here - it's just a little wood that reflects our desire to have a positive impact on the welfare of the community, in particular through environmental work."

Richard Witt, development officer for the Yorkshire Dales national park, said: "A lot of people might not like the name but we feel it's a small price to pay to give the landscape additional character and beauty, as well as being a vital refuge for wild animals and plants."



Well wrapped up: A model on the catwalk at the Betty Jackson show, part of London Fashion Week, yesterday

## Inquiry over delay to hospital wing

NICHOLAS TIMMINS  
Public Policy Editor

The National Audit Office is to launch a full investigation into a four-year delay and huge cost over-runs at a proposed new wing to Guy's Hospital in south London. The former Philip Harris House, once proclaimed as a flagship, state-of-the-art creation, is fast becoming the biggest building disaster in the health service's history.

The NAO - the Government spending watchdog - confirmed it is to follow up a preliminary investigation with a full inquiry into the reasons for delay and cost over-runs in a project now expected to be four years late and to have cost £152m, almost double the original £79m estimate.

Simon Hughes, the Liberal Democrat MP for Bermondsey, claimed figures he has been provided with show that the NHS Trust has "wasted" millions following the latest round of negotiations with the contractors Higgs and Hill.

He said the trust has written-off £5m in penalties for missed completion deadlines, and agreed another £2m to complete a building now known as Phase Three after Sir Philip Harris withdrew a promised £5m donation when its use was changed as part of the controversial merger of Guy's and St Thomas's hospitals.

Mr Hughes said: "The building will be four years late and yet instead of the trust being compensated by the builders they are actually paying out. It is a scandal that it has taken so long for it to be completed when we are crying out for the services it is meant to provide."

## England faces double-inflation council tax rise

WILL BENNETT

People living in the most modest homes in Liverpool will pay more council tax than the wealthiest inhabitants of Westminster when council tax bills in England rise by more than double the rate of inflation in April.

According to two surveys published yesterday, the average rise will be about 6 per cent - less than the 8 per cent increase predicted by the Government across the United Kingdom. But the final figure will rise when tax details from some London councils are published.

Liverpool is likely to set the highest rate, with a recommendation for a Band D tax of £1000.82, an increase of 3.9 per cent. Even the most modest homes in Band A there will face a rate of £667.21, which is more than the inhabitant of a large house in Westminster, who is

likely to face a bill of £590 in Band H, the highest.

Labour-controlled South-west, in south London, yesterday revealed that its council tax will go up from £589 to £730 on Band D properties in the middle of the price range, an increase of nearly 24 per cent. The figure was published too late to be included in either survey.

Martin Pilgrim, finance under secretary at the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, warned that rises could have been much higher but councils were cutting expenditure and drawing heavily on reserves to keep tax increases down.

Tory-controlled Westminster City Council is using £8.3m of reserves to keep the council tax bill for Band D properties down to £295, a 7 per cent rise. A 20 per cent increase had been recommended by the council's chief executive.

One of the surveys was

compiled by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy for BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme, which obtained figures for council tax rises from two-thirds of the billing authorities in England. The tax raises the difference between the amount councils budget to spend and the money they receive from central government.

The survey reveals that average bills for properties in Band D will increase by £37 to £646, a 6.1 per cent increase. The increases are highest in the West Midlands (7.4 per cent), Greater London (7.3 per cent) and the rest of South-east England (6.9 per cent) and lowest in northern England (4.9 per cent). The rate of inflation was 2.9 per cent in January.

The second survey, which was carried out by the *Local Government Chronicle*, which covered more than one-third of English councils, comes up with a similar figure, an average rise of 6.1 per cent or £35.60. It shows huge differences between individual councils.

The biggest rise found by this survey is in Rochester, Kent, where the Band D increase will be 17.9 per cent, followed by Cherwell, Oxfordshire, with 16.1 per cent and Wolverhampton with 15.2 per cent. A 10.3 per cent rise in Hartlepool, Cleveland, will push the Band D rate to £839.

Scots face average council tax rises of 15% - but for many the rise could be far higher. Scottish councils, which meet next week to fix budgets warn of big rises and spending cuts.

### How the increases compare

	Average Band D equivalent				
	1995-96	96-97	% increase	Total rise	
Greater London	£575.60	£617.60	7.3	£42.00	
Met districts	678.41	725.58	7.0	47.16	
Non-Met districts	596.74	629.42	5.5	32.68	
All England	609.11	646.06	6.1	36.97	
South-east (excl London)	568.06	607.04	6.9	38.98	
East Anglia	560.32	596.23	6.2	35.91	
East Midlands	632.09	664.52	5.1	32.43	
Northern	677.45	710.47	4.9	33.02	
North-west	705.98	744.86	5.5	38.88	
South-west	596.49	623.63	4.6	27.15	
West Midlands	612.97	658.53	7.4	45.56	
Yorkshire and Humberside	630.56	658.90	4.6	28.34	

## Family to sue hospital

A coroner yesterday recorded a misadventure verdict on a teenager who died after routine cosmetic surgery to have her nose pinned back. The family of Janine Connor, 14, are now planning to sue the hospital where the operation took place.

After the inquest, Janine's mother, Mrs Margaret Usher, said it was "horrendous" that 10 doctors in the operating theatre at Withington Hospital, Manchester, were unable to work life-saving equipment because it was so old that none of them was trained to use it.

The two-day inquest heard how Janine, of Ashton-under-Lyne, agreed to surgery on 4 January last year under general anaesthetic after originally intending to have a local anaesthetic. An anaesthetist noticed that her face was swelling as she

came round and Janine then suffered a cardiac arrest.

Doctors said gas was not escaping from her body after being pumped in by a ventilator and this affected her heart.

When doctors tried to give her electric shocks from two 25-year-old defibrillator machines, they were unable to because they did not know that at least 5lb of pressure had to be applied to the paddles on her chest. Up to 10 minutes were lost before a third defibrillator, which could be used, was found.

Eventually, doctors had to cut open her chest and manually massage her heart. But Janine never regained consciousness and died six days later at the Royal Manchester Children's Hospital, in Pendlebury.

Giving his verdict, Mr Coppel said the 20-year-old ventila-

tor machine used was regarded as "a good solid work horse" and the mystery of what had gone wrong to cause Janine's breathing problem remained unresolved.

On the use of the defibrillators - which were regularly maintained - he added: "None of them knew about the old-fashioned *modus operandi* though there was a set of written instructions. I suppose under pressure one doesn't look to see something in writing."

Neil Kinsella, solicitor for the family, said they had been granted legal aid to pursue a negligence claim. "At this stage there is no satisfactory explanation of what went wrong to cause Janine to go into cardiac arrest. The chances of her being resuscitated look as though they were reduced."

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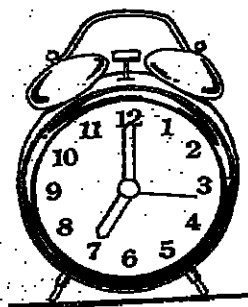
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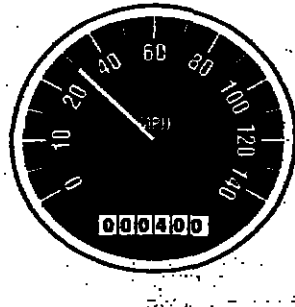
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## international

## British businessman expelled by Moscow

PHIL REEVES  
Moscow

The Foreign Office said yesterday it was seeking an explanation from Moscow over why a British businessman has been thrown out of Russia for "activities incompatible with his status" - a Cold War-era term used to denote spying.

It is the second time Nigel Shakespeare, a former assistant military attaché with the British embassy, has felt the wrath of the Moscow authorities, as he was among eight British diplomats and three journalists who were thrown out in May 1989 after the same number of Russian diplomats and media workers were ordered out of Britain.

The move is further evidence of Russia's erratic relations with the West, which have veered from warm enthusiasm to cool uncertainty in the last few months, and have given rise

to fears that the new Foreign Minister, Yevgeny Primakov, has hard-line tendencies. Mr Shakespeare, 46, was ordered aboard a flight to London by Russian officials after flying into Sheremetyevo airport from a 10-day business trip to Kazakhstan. He had been working in Moscow for Gorandel Trading, which offers security and risk management.

Although the officials supplied him with no explanation for their decision at the time - it happened on 15 February, but details only emerged yesterday - the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the security services (the heirs to the KGB) had found "negative elements in his activities" which were "not compatible" with his status as a businessman.

"He was not expelled. His visa was terminated," said Alexander Goltisn, a senior Foreign Ministry official. He

suggested spying might be "too strong" a word for the allegations against Mr Shakespeare, yet hinted that the move was related to the Briton's former job as a diplomat. The affair would not affect the "friendly relations" between Russia and the United Kingdom, he added.

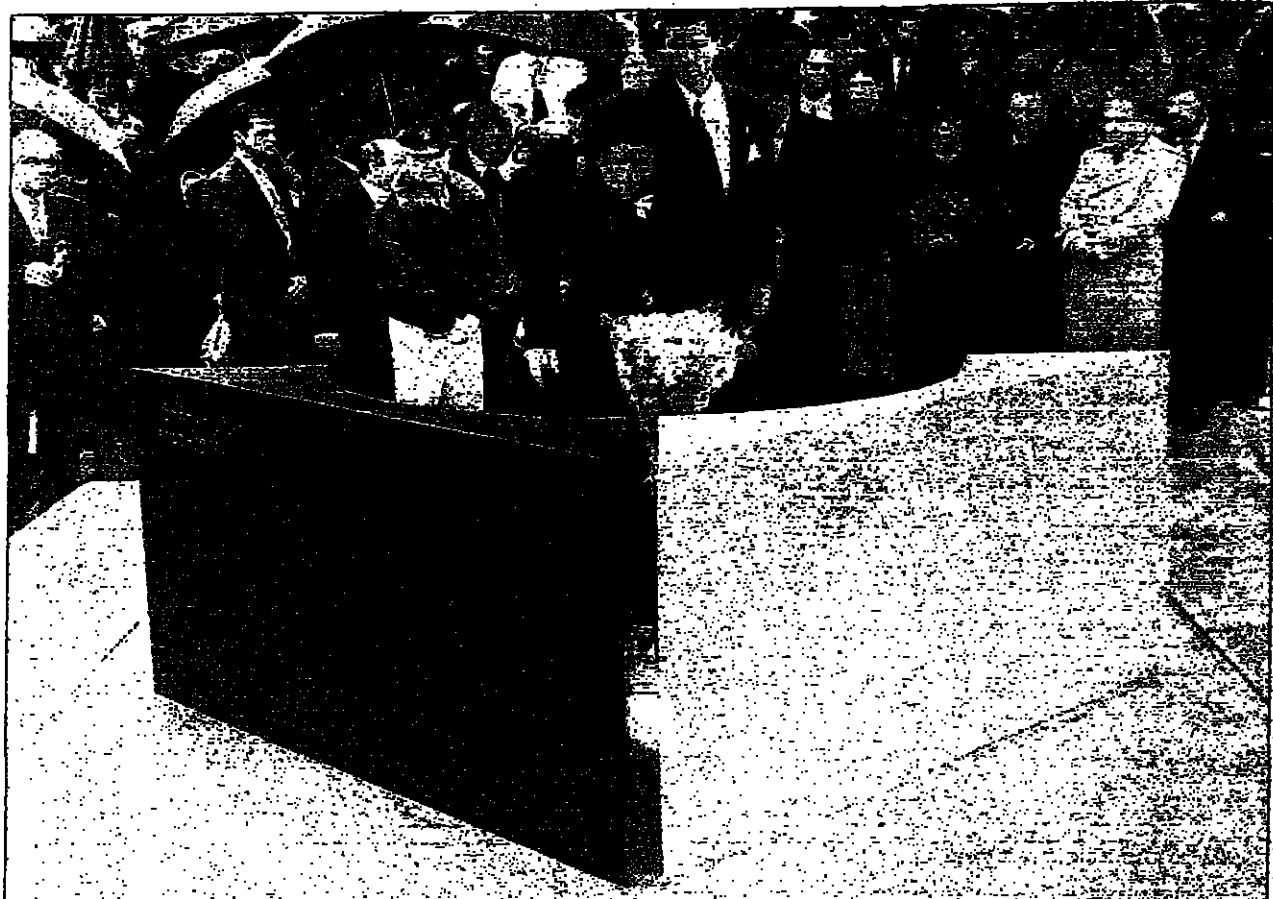
Mr Shakespeare, speaking from north London, rejected any suggestion that he had been a spy: "I categorically deny it. My response is that the charge is totally unjustified." He refused to speculate over why he had been expelled, saying that he had no idea and that it was "totally unfair".

The British embassy in Moscow said that it had not been told why Mr Shakespeare was forced to leave the country, and was seeking clarification. But the Foreign Office has made clear that it regards the manner in which he was abruptly sent home as unacceptable.

He had no opportunity to contact diplomats or his family before being ushered on to a plane. "We shall be raising his treatment - and particularly his treatment at the airport - with the Russians," said James Pavel, an embassy spokesman. Mr Shakespeare began travelling to Russia in 1992. Thirteen months ago he moved to Moscow permanently, with his wife, Rosalind and child, Clara.

Until January, he worked with accountants Price Waterhouse, before leaving to work for Gorandel, believed to be a British-Russian joint venture. Robin Hall, a former colleague at Price Waterhouse, said: "As far as I know, he was completely unaware the Russian authorities had him down as a spy."

A steady trickle of expulsions for alleged spying have continued. Last July Alexander Malikov, a Russian journalist, left Britain accused of spying.



Yitzhak Rabin's widow, Leah, lays flowers on his tomb in Jerusalem yesterday. Photograph: David Silverman/Reuters

## Israel spurns Hamas offer to halt bombing

PATRICK COCKBURN  
Jerusalem

Israel yesterday rejected an offer by the Hamas Islamic militant organisation to call off its suicide bombing campaign in return for the release of its prisoners and immunity from revenge.

Ehud Barak, the Foreign Minister, said that Israel could not undercut Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority, which "must do the job". Hamas and Izzedine al-Qassim, its military wing, had issued a joint statement saying there would be no more attacks for a week while its offer is being considered.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation chairman had given his own deadline for all unregistered weapons in the areas he controls to be handed over by last night. Otherwise his security forces would start searches for arms, threatening people who hold unregistered weapons with 15 years in prison.

"In general, Israel does not negotiate with the terror cells of Hamas," Mr Barak said. Earlier in the week Israel was reported to have said to Mr Arafat that if he would not deal with Hamas, it might open talks with the organisation.

The Israeli Prime Minister, Shimon Peres, has also said that if Mr Arafat does not rein in extremists, Israel may delay the troop withdrawal in the West Bank town of Hebron due at the end of this month.

Mr Peres has warned that the Israeli closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, barring 60,000 Palestinian workers from reaching their jobs inside Israel, will stay in effect until the security situation improves.

The border closures, thought

to be costing the Palestinian economy \$4m (£2.6m) a day in lost wages and exports, have caused a backlash against Hamas among Palestinians who have blamed the group for their financial hardships.

Israeli security services say that the orders to launch the suicide bomb attacks last Sunday, which killed 23 Israelis, were given by the Hamas leadership in Damascus. Izzedine al-Qassim in Gaza says it was not involved, which, if true, means that Hamas is split. This is precisely what Mr Arafat has been trying to achieve in the past, but the fragmentation of the organisation makes it more difficult to control.

Labour party strategists have little doubt that more suicide bombs will mean that it will certainly lose the election to be held on 29 May. The bombs have strengthened the opposition Likud bloc by persuading David Levy, the former foreign minister, to lead his small breakaway party, Gesher, back into the fold in return for seven guaranteed seats in the Knesset (parliament).

Mr Levy has reportedly been offered the post of foreign minister in a future Likud government.

In the latest poll carried out by the daily *Ma'ariv*, 7 per cent of voters said they had switched from Labour to Likud because of the bomb attacks. Mr Peres led Binyamin Netanyahu, the opposition leader, by 46 per cent to 44 per cent. Two-thirds of voters thought the Israeli army should operate against organisations like Hamas in territory controlled by Mr Arafat.

A similar proportion said they still supported the peace process with the Palestinians.

## Gorbachev joins race for presidency

TONY BARBER  
Europe Editor

Mikhail Gorbachev, the former Soviet president and Nobel Peace Prize winner, said yesterday he would stand as a candidate in Russia's presidential election in June.

Mr Gorbachev, who is 65 today, made the announcement at a news conference in Moscow at which he portrayed himself as a centrist alternative to President Boris Yeltsin and to the leading challenger, Gennady Zyuganov of the Communist Party.

Recent opinion polls suggest Mr Gorbachev has almost no hope of winning the presidency. Whereas Mr Zyuganov consistently scores 20 per cent or more in the polls, and Mr Yeltsin scores about 10 per cent, Mr Gorbachev's popularity rating is barely 1 per cent.

"His time is past," said Sergei Shakhrai, a former minister in Mr Yeltsin's government. "Intellectuals and the West recognise his merits, but that's not enough to win the election."

Mr Gorbachev said he hoped to unite "all democratic forces" behind his candidacy, but it is difficult to see where his support might come from.

Most ordinary voters, in so far as they think of him at all, appear to hold him responsible for the political chaos and economic slump that turned their lives upside down in the late Soviet period.

Nor does he command much sympathy in Russian political



Gorbachev: Slim chance

circles. Reformists blame him for refusing, when he was president, to make a decisive break with Communism and the principle of a united Soviet state, while Communists and nationalists despise him as a traitor.

By throwing his hat into the ring, Mr Gorbachev seems to be calculating that he may at least succeed in disrupting the election campaign of Mr Yeltsin, his bitter rival. The two men have been at odds since 1987, when Mr Gorbachev forced Mr Yeltsin's dismissal from the inner Soviet leadership.

Mr Yeltsin secured his revenge by becoming the champion of the democratic opposition, winning the Russian presidency in June 1991 and organising the dissolution of the Soviet Union after the failed August hardline coup. Mr Gorbachev, who is not a member of a political party, needs 1 million signatures of support by 16 April to be registered as a candidate in the 16 June election.



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مکان العمل







## international

# Gun battle ends hunt for Italian serial killer

ANDREW GUMBEL  
Rome

The hunt for a serial killer stalking the sleepy north Italian town of Merano ended in violence yesterday as the culprit claimed two more victims, holed up in a lonely farmhouse with two hostages, and then, after a dramatic gun battle with police, turned the murder weapon on himself.

The man responsible for shooting six people at close range over the past three weeks turned out to be a German-speaking neo-Nazi committed to reuniting the Alto Adige with Austria. All but one of the victims were Italian-speakers. The alarm was raised in mid-morning when farmers in the hamlet of Rifano, about six miles from the centre of town, heard gunshots coming from the house of a local bricklayer, Tullio Melchiori. The murderer, Ferdinand Gampfer, had killed Melchiori, his landlord, and had forced his wife and daughter at gunpoint to follow him into a barn next door.

When police arrived, Gampfer barely gave them time to discover the body before he opened fire, shooting a Carabinieri officer in the head. The officer was whisked to hospital but died three hours later.

Other police took cover in the surrounding woodland. Eventually they fired several volleys of tear gas into the barn, setting the building on fire. The shooting stopped and the police stormed in, to find the two hostages unharmed on the ground floor and the murderer dead with his weapon in his hand. A note in German read: "You got here too late." He had shot himself through the mouth.

With his hulking frame, blond hair and short beard, Ferdinand Gampfer, 39, was a perfect fit for the Identikit picture of the murderer developed since the shooting of a factory worker in Merano's main square on Tuesday.

Next to his body was the blue rucksack that was spotted by several witnesses. The gun was a match for the 22 weapon used in the earlier killings.

Among the documents recovered by police were posters and stickers in German, advocating the Alto Adige's reabsorption into Austria. A long note left beside Melchiori's body included a "terrifying" pact to Nazism and an admission, which has yet to be verified, that Gampfer murdered one or more children.

Merano had been living in fear since 8 February, when a senior Bundesbank official and his Italian fiancée were shot. At first investigators suspected a link with the banker's work or his estranged German wife. They now believe the two were "punished" for wanting to settle in Merano as an ethnically mixed couple. A shrine marking the site of their murder was smeared with human faeces a few days after their deaths.

The third murder, targeting a crippled local farmer, triggered the arrest of a young Italian-speaking plasterer, Luca Nobili, who was found near the scene with bloodstains on his clothing. He was released from custody last night.

The Alto Adige, or South Tyrol, was part of Austria-Hungary until the end of the First World War, when it was given to Italy. It was dogged by ethnic tension, owing to Mussolini's aggressive attempts to Italianise it during the 1930s there were regular terrorist attacks.

In recent decades, the nationalist sentiments of the German-speakers and the strong neo-fascist sympathies of many local Italians have been checked by the economic benefits brought by the Alto Adige's special status as an autonomous region. However, the two communities still have little contact, and in many bars, shops and hotels, members of one or other ethnic group are banned altogether.



Cream of the crop: A Dutch crew filming 'The Milkmaid' at the opening of an exhibition of paintings by Johannes Vermeer at the Mauritshuis in The Hague. The collection of works by the artist is the largest assembled under one roof. Photograph: Laurie Lewis

## Serb charged over role in Sarajevo siege

EMMA DALY  
Sarajevo

The international war-crimes tribunal in The Hague yesterday charged a Bosnian Serb general with crimes against humanity for abetting the siege of Sarajevo, which killed more than 10,000 people and wounded 50,000.

Hours after the Bosnian government declared that the blockade was over - in practice it ended in December after the arrival of Nato troops - the UN tribunal indicted Lieutenant-General Djordje Djukic, a Yugoslav Army officer who ran the Bosnian Serbs' logistics operations.

The general was indicted for aiding and abetting the siege in which "Bosnian Serb military forces, on a widespread and systematic basis, deliberately or indiscriminately fired on civilian targets that were of no military significance in order to kill, injure, terrorise and demoralise the civilian population".



Djukic: Organised weapons

The general's lawyer, Milan Vujan, was contemptuous: "This contains one fact: that General Djukic is in the Bosnian Serb army," he said. "If that is all they have, we can get the trial over today. Yes, he's in the Bosnian Serb army. There's not one other fact here."

General Djukic fell into the hands of his alleged victims on 30 January, when his driver took a wrong turn into Sarajevo and was stopped by Bosnian

police. They arrested General Djukic and Colonel Aleksa Krsmanovic, a colleague, prompting an angry response from Bosnian Serb leaders in Pale, who severed ties with the Nato peace force (I-For).

Two weeks later, General Djukic and Colonel Krsmanovic were dispatched on a Nato plane to The Hague for investigation, to the rage - and fear - of their military and political masters. Both men refused to co-operate with the tribunal as witnesses; the Chief Prosecutor's response was to indict General Djukic and extend the colonel's detention.

"Being unable to continue to regard General Djukic as a witness we have had the opportunity of considering evidence we have against him," Judge Richard Goldstone said yesterday. "Whilst our investigations... are not yet complete, we considered that in respect of two counts there is sufficient evidence to justify indicting General Djukic."

Judge Goldstone said the indictment was likely to be amended as investigations continued. General Djukic was already known to the tribunal: his name figured in evidence attached to the earlier indictments on war crimes of Radovan Karadzic and General Ratko Mladic, the political and military leaders of the Bosnian Serb forces.

Most Bosnian Serbs were angered by the arrest of General Djukic, arguing that he and Colonel Krsmanovic were "backroom boys" who could not have blood on their hands. But both had an important role in organising the weapons and ammunition for the siege, which ended formally yesterday when Bosnian police took control of the Serb-held suburb of Iljaci, linking the city to government territory for the first time since May 1992.

Both men could bring down bigger prey, perhaps even President Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia. Despite the routine

denials from Belgrade, it is clear Serbia's help was crucial to the war effort of its Bosnian clients. General Djukic is an officer in both the Yugoslav and Bosnian Serb armies.

General Djukic, due in court on Monday to enter a plea, is unlikely to face trial for months. The only other suspect in detention, Dusan Tadic, is expected to stand trial on 7 May, more than a year after his extradition from Germany to The Hague. Both he and General Djukic are hoisted in a specially built cell-block in Scheveningen prison.

Colonel Krsmanovic will be another neighbour for at least a month, held as a possible suspect and witness. Judge Goldstone is considering whether to indict him or release him to the Bosnian authorities, who would pursue their own case against him. The colonel refused to attend earlier hearings because he does not recognise the tribunal. He may now consider the role of turncoat preferable to that of defendant.

## Spanish set for life after Gonzalez

ELIZABETH NASH  
Madrid

The two main contenders in Spain's general election concluded their campaign yesterday with an appeal to uncommitted voters, possibly 20 per cent of the electorate, whose decision tomorrow could determine whether the opposition conservative Popular Party wins an absolute majority.

The PP, under Jose Maria Aznar, has campaigned for change and renewal. In his final message yesterday he insisted on the need for a changeover and promised strong, efficient government. Lifting the concept of fear from the Socialists' vocabulary, he urged voters not to be afraid to opt for "the change that Spain needs".

The Prime Minister, Felipe Gonzalez, has defended what he calls the historical changes his 13-year government achieved. At the climax of a campaign marked by warnings of the return of the right, he recalled the old Republican slogan of the civil war: "No pasaran" (They shall not pass). The cry still stirs the heart of many Spanish progressives, though younger voters may find it mystifying.

Mr Gonzalez urged left-wingers not to waste their votes on the pro-Communist United Left, led by Julio Anguita, which, by dividing the left, amounted to a vote for the PP. In his final radio interview yesterday, Mr Gonzalez regretted corruption had damaged his government, and admitted it had wounded him. But he defended his former interior minister Jose Barrionuevo, accused by the Supreme Court of masterminding a dirty war against ETA separatists in the 1980s.

In the closing days of the campaign each leader mobilised a clique of show-business figures. Julio Iglesias, an erstwhile Gonzalez fan, mounted the platform at a PP rally to pledge himself to the conservative cause "with my soul and with my head" and passionately kissed Mr Aznar's hand.

The Socialists won the support of the Andalusian-born Hollywood star Antonio Banderas, who sent them a video in which he says "I continue to believe in Felipe Gonzalez as a statesman".

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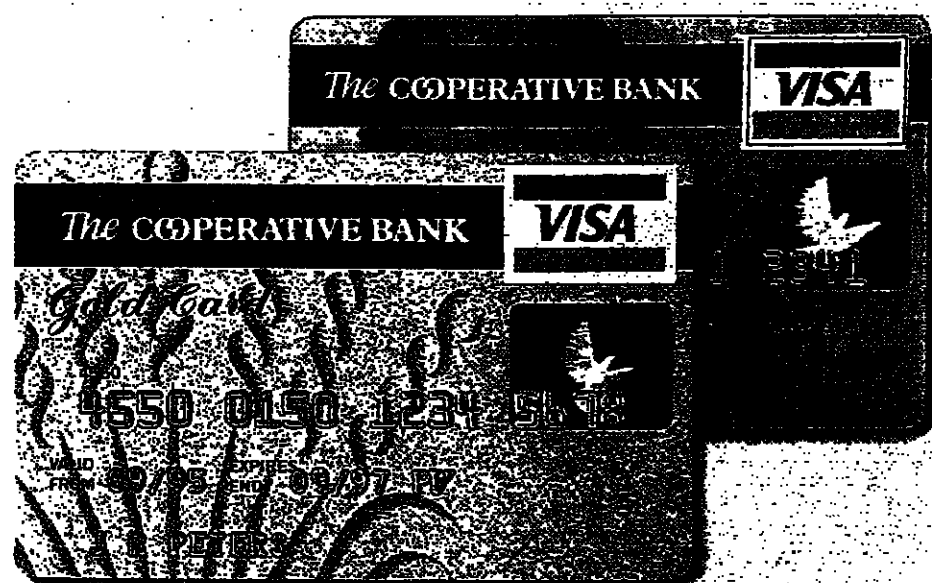
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مكتبة الأمل



# US to guard Cuban exiles' ocean protest

PHIL DAVIDSON  
Miami

US Coast Guard vessels and aircraft will attempt to keep the peace today as Cuban-Americans sail and fly from Miami in a protest-cum-memorial demonstration to within 20 miles of the Cuban coast. The exiles plan to toss wreaths and candles into the Straits of Florida in the area where four exiles were shot down in two small planes by Cuban MiG fighters a week earlier.

With relations between Bill Clinton and Fidel Castro at their lowest point to date, the President's order for a heavy Coast Guard escort - with Air Force fighters and naval vessels on standby in Florida and the Caribbean - appeared aimed as much at keeping the exiles in check as protecting them from any further Cuban attack.

The US wanted the exiles, expected to sail in up to 40 private boats with two light aircraft overhead, that they would face civil and criminal penalties if they tried to provoke Mr Castro by pushing ahead into Cuba's 12-mile territorial waters. The organisers have promised not to but there were some fears here last night that the most radical anti-Castro activists may break ranks.

Some moderate exiles expressed fears that any unforeseen incident could create confusion in the US response and suck in the US military forces on stand-by.

The White House press spokesman, Mike McCurry, said the US had warned Cuban officials not to interfere with the flotilla. "In plain English, the United States of America will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour by the Cuban government," he said, a phrase seen by some as almost dangerously

vague in the event that anything unforeseen occurs. Mr McCurry said Mr Clinton supported the idea of a memorial service at sea to the four victims from the Miami-based Brothers to the Rescue. The group flies the Straits of Florida looking for Cuban boat people but has also made at least two flights over Havana to drop pro-democracy leaflets.

Cuba's Foreign Minister, Roberto Robaina, said Cuba would take no action provided the flotilla and planes stayed outside the island's territorial waters. That, however, raised the question of definition. Cuba said its MiGs shot the two planes down over its waters, though US radar tracking showed they were outside the 12-mile limit, 17 and 25 miles respectively. Cuba apparently acted because a third plane had entered the 12-mile limit or because all three were south of

the 24th parallel, about 40 miles north of Cuba, recognised even by the US as the island's Air Defence Identification Zone.

A dozen Coast Guard cutters will accompany the flotilla, backed by two unarmed Coast Guard C-130 planes.

Meanwhile, Canada slammed Mr Clinton for backing anti-Castro legislation that could affect countries, such as Canada, Britain and Spain, which do business with Cuba. The Canadian Trade Minister, Art Eggleton, said he would meet US officials in Washington tomorrow to argue that the so-called Helms-Burton bill violates international law and the North American Free Trade Agreement. He said Canada may take the US to the international court in The Hague. The bill would mean Cuban exiles could sue in US courts for the return of property they owned before Mr Castro's 1959 revolution.



Relatives being comforted at Lima airport, Peru, after learning that there were no survivors when a Faucett Airlines flight with 123 people on board crashed in an Andean mountain canyon on Thursday. Photograph: AP

## Jet speedometer blamed for crash

PHIL DAVIDSON  
Latin America Correspondent

A speedometer which told the pilots they were flying faster than they really were caused last month's crash of an aircraft full of German tourists off the Dominican Republic, it emerged yesterday.

Initial reports from the United States National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), released by Dominican Republic officials, suggested the velocity indicator on the Turkish-owned Birgenair Boeing 757 had been reading 335 knots (about 370 mph) as the jet reached 7,000 feet shortly after take-off from the resort of Puerto Plata on 6 February.

In fact, it was flying at a much lower speed, the engines stalled and the aircraft went into a dive, plunging into the Atlantic Ocean and killing all 189 people on board.

An article in yesterday's *Washington Post* said there were indications the Turkish flight crew had known before take-off that there were problems with its velocity instruments but decided to go ahead with the flight, returning German tourists to Berlin and Frankfurt. There was no immediate comment from the airline.

The 757, leased for the flight by Birgenair to its local affiliate, Alas Nacionales, had been idle at Puerto Plata for at least two weeks, raising concerns at the time that its maintenance may not have been up to scratch. It was pressed into service at the last minute to replace a Boeing

767 which Alas Nacionales was scheduled to use. Some officials at the time said the 767 had had problems with its hydraulics. Others said the airline had opted for the smaller 757 because the flight was considerably underbooked.

There was no immediate response from the Boeing company in Seattle, Washington, which lost its first 757 on 20 December when an American Airlines flight from Miami hit a mountain in Cali, Colombia, killing all but four of the 164 on board. Pilot error or a misunderstanding with the Cali control tower have been provisionally blamed for that crash.

General Hector Roman Torres, the Dominican Republic's head of civil aviation, told the Associated Press that the NTSB had reached its conclusion after studying the flight recorders recovered from the seabed last week by a US Navy guided robot. "An alarm went off indicating that the aeroplane was losing a lot of velocity, and 84 seconds later the aeroplane hit the water," he said.

The US banned all Dominican Republic airlines from landing in the US three years ago, saying its civil aviation authority was not up to international standards. Before the crash occurred, the Dominicans had hoped to overturn the ban. But Germany, too, said this week it wanted a "European Union" "black list" of countries with low air-safety standards following the Dominican crash, vowing to go it alone if necessary.

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## international

# Court forces Dole to fight for New York

DAVID USBORNE  
New York

It was meant to be the state that was locked up for Bob Dole: not so any more. Less than a week before the Republicans in New York get their say about who should be their nominee for the 1996 presidential election, the courts have decided that the party's efforts to keep it a one-man derby are unfair.

The intervention this week by a US appeals court means that New York, which will account for more than 10 per cent of the delegates at the party convention in August, is about to have its first contested Republican primary in its history. Suddenly, next Thursday's vote is vitally important.

The court declared unconstitutional party rules that restrict the ability of candidates to get on to the ballot in the state's 31 electoral districts. Forced to collect more than

## THE US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS '96

1,000 signatures from registered Republicans in each district, candidates had little chance of qualifying without the blessing of the party apparatus.

Doing the anointing has been Republican US Senator Alfonse D'Amato and his choice has always been Mr Dole. Until now, in what to most observers seemed like a perversion of democracy, there was little question but that Mr Dole would simply be handed the state.

Now Mr Dole will have to face competition from Pat Buchanan in about 18 of the districts and, more importantly, from Steve Forbes, whose name will appear on ballots in all of them. State-wide, the New York primary has been transformed

into a critical head-to-head between Mr Forbes and Mr Dole. Notorious for its unpredictability in elections, the state appears to be tilting marginally towards Mr Dole. The latest poll, published by the *New York Post*, showed Mr Dole leading Mr Forbes by 31 per cent to 27 per cent. Mr Buchanan was trailing with 16 per cent.

Whereas until just days ago, New York could have counted on being largely ignored by the candidates, the state now is preparing for a campaign blitz. For Mr Dole, who is just showing signs of recovering some balance in the race, this is bad news. He will be forced to spend time and money — which he has in dwindling supply — on the state when he had thought it was not going to be necessary.

It also means that the rich bag of delegates cannot be all his. New York is not a winner-takes-all state, so even if Mr

Forbes comes in second, he could take a sizeable chunk of the delegates, with Mr Buchanan perhaps also running away with a few.

The Forbes campaign, re-energised by its candidate's first place earlier this week in Arizona, is jubilant. "We are 1,000 per cent committed to New York," said Gretchen Morgenson, Mr Forbes's press secretary. "We are going to be a huge force in New York. We have been brutalised by the New York State Republican Party."

Mr Buchanan faces a tough battle. He has qualified in only a limited number of districts and his nationalist positions will not go down easily in a state where there is such a mix of ethnicities. A Buchanan campaign organiser from Staten Island was quoted earlier this week as alleging that Jews control all the money in the US and suggesting that South African blacks fared better under apartheid.



Sounding off: Mr Forbes with the media in South Carolina, a vital state for Republican hopefuls

Photograph: AP

## Buchanan set for fresh defeat

RUPERT CORNWELL  
Charleston, South Carolina

Senator Bob Dole is favourite to fend off Pat Buchanan's challenge and win today's pivotal Republican primary in South Carolina, whose importance in the race for the nomination extends well beyond the 37 delegates the state will send to this summer's convention in San Diego.

On the eve of voting, polls put Mr Dole clearly ahead of the former Reagan speech-writer and conservative commentator, suggesting a strong Dole organisation here and the support of the Republican hierarchy may outweigh Mr Buchanan's appeal to the Christian right and blue-collar workers fearful for their jobs.

Predictably it was Mr Buchanan, with his denunciation of abortion and moral decay, who drew the loudest cheers of the four major candidates at a Christian-coalition rally on Thursday. But Mr Dole avoided disaster, as he did earlier in the day at a televised candidates' debate mainly notable for vicious exchanges between the two lesser contenders here, the publisher Steve Forbes and Lamar Alexander, an ex-governor of Tennessee.

For Mr Dole and Mr Alexander especially, the stakes here

are enormous. With his campaign close to the maximum permitted federal-spending ceiling, the Senate majority leader must secure a victory if he is to break clear in New England, New York, and the rest of the South, which hold their own primaries over the next 10 days.

Anything less than a second place here and victory in Georgia on Tuesday would surely doom Mr Alexander, who has yet to win a primary and will run out of money if potential financial backers lose faith. Yet he appears to be running no better than third, and could be out of the contest after "Super Tuesday" on 12 March.

No such worries bother Mr Forbes, who has indicated he will continue right through. Since he is spending his own money, he is not affected by the \$37m (£24.6m) limit that may soon hobble Mr Dole's media efforts in major states like New York, Florida and Texas which lie immediately ahead and especially California on 26 March, if the race is not settled by then.

Also this weekend Wyoming is holding caucuses to select the 12 delegates it will send to San Diego.

Again Mr Dole is favourite but Mr Forbes could make a showing in this traditionally anti-government and libertarian Western state.

### IN BRIEF

#### China forces UN to cut Haiti mission

New York — Brandishing its veto power, China forced the United States and its allies to scale back the UN mission in Haiti and shorten its mandate. Peking held the Haiti operation hostage for several days, threatening to veto a draft resolution unless the UN Security Council acceded to its demands. A negative vote by China would kill the resolution. Diplomats said the subtext was Peking's anger at both Haiti and the US for positive overtures to Taiwan, which it considers a rebegade province. *Reuters*

#### Croatian murderer extradited

Zagreb — A Croat convicted of a murder that helped touch off the Serb-Croat war in eastern Croatia in 1991 has been extradited to Croatia from Germany. Ante Gudelj, 48, was sentenced in 1994 *in absentia* to 20 years in prison — the maximum penalty under Croatian law — for killing Josip Reihl-Kir, a police official in eastern Croatia, and two of his associates. *AP*

#### Moi meets opposition leaders

Nairobi — For the first time since political pluralism was restored in Kenya five years ago, President Daniel arap Moi met three opposition leaders yesterday. Chairman Mwai Kibaki of the Democratic Party and Michael Kijana Wamwangi of Ford-Kenya and Martin Shikuku, secretary-general of Ford-Asili, said Mr Moi called the meeting. *AP*

#### Women back gay cleric in Cyprus

Nicosia — Women from Morphou district in north-western Cyprus picked the island's archbishopric in Nicosia yesterday, demanding the church lift sanctions on a cleric barred from being a candidate for bishop because of alleged homosexual activities. The Cyprus Orthodox Church has refused to list Archimandrite Panagiotis Meracis as a candidate in the elections. *Reuters*



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# The American airman, his Russian wife, her lover the British diplomat, their plan to make millions and the story scandalising Brussels



St Petersburg: home of the mysterious Ilya Baskin  
Photograph: Frank Spooner

Sitting in Rick's Café, his favourite Brussels haunt, Marshall Michel adjusts his tie-pin and confesses that he would have his Russian wife, Elena, back "in a second" despite it all. He isn't surprised that Michael Emerson, the European Union's former ambassador to Moscow, should have fallen for her, or that he had been tempted by the lure of making "big bucks" in Russia.

"She's real special," Michel says, in his Louisiana drawl. "But I've been bombed out by the whole damn business." A US fighter pilot during the Vietnam war, he has been through tough times before. But finding those documents has been "something else". The computer files that Michel is referring to are at the heart of a story that has scandalised normally sedate Brussels, and cast a shadow over the cleaner than clean image of normally staid European Union officials. "I mean," he adds, with an unsettling stare, "if an American diplomat had done this it would have been 'good night'."

Meanwhile, in the Minsk Tavern, on Brussels's Chausse de Charleroi, Michael Emerson, the European Union's former ambassador to Moscow, and Elena Prokhorova, his 40-year-old Russian lover and Michel's wife, are also taking stock. "I feel I've been watching a film - a nightmare. It hasn't really been about me," says Elena. Mr Emerson is not talking. He is said to be in "bad shape". His deserted historian wife, Barbara (they met as undergraduates at Oxford and married in 1966), spoke chipperly yesterday of "poor

Michael" and "le démon de midi" (mid-life crisis), but also exclaimed: "I refuse to be Brussels's answer to Princess Di."

For two weeks, Brussels has been gripped by this tale of the American airman, his wife and her British diplomat lover. The story has centred on allegations that Mr Emerson, having run off with Ms Prokhorova, misused his position as ambassador to Moscow and his inside knowledge of EU aid programmes to set up a business empire in Russia, with Ms Prokhorova's help. Under a draft company plan the two were discussing, Mr Emerson, as president of the proposed company, would have earned \$30,000 a month, with a one-off lump sum of \$1.6 million. The revelations have shocked, embarrassed and titillated. The story has spun from the Russian city of St Petersburg to Kirghizia, the far-flung outpost of the former Soviet empire and then on to Jersey, London and back to Brussels. It has not just attracted the attention of Brussels's diplomatic chattering classes. The European Commission has launched an investigation into the affair as have the Belgian Police. But the manner in which the story unfolded - and the unlikely cast of characters it has involved - has been almost as extraordinary as the allegations themselves.

The story began to spill out early in February, when Marshall Michel, aged 53, who describes himself as a "straight-talking kind of guy", returned to his Brussels home distraught in the knowledge that his new Russian wife - the tall, slender, dark and highly intelligent Elena Prokhorova - had left him for another man, Michael Emerson.

Mr Michel first met Ms Prokhorova in 1991 while he was working as a US air-force planner at Nato in Brussels. She then went to work as a translator with the European Commission in Moscow, but the couple kept in touch, and married in August last year, when Ms Prokhorova returned to Brussels to live with Mr Michel. She was used to moving in high diplomatic circles. She had previously been married to the Russian ambassador to the Council of Europe. Her impressive curriculum vitae (take one entry: 1977-1979 - translator, India - USSR State Committee for External Economic Relations) has caused much comment among old Soviet hands, who know how translators were once used by the KGB.

Mr Michel learned that his wife was leaving him by fax. "She faxed me a Dear John letter when I was away in Washington. Can you believe it?" he asks, evidently still distressed. In the fax she disclosed she had been having an affair with Mr Emerson while they were both working in Moscow. Mr Emerson had returned to Brussels in January after a four-year stint. Once he was reunited with his lover, he left his wife of almost 30 years, with whom he had three children. On returning to his empty home, Mr Michel realised the couple had been

By Sarah Helm

together in his house and he had reason to believe they had used his computer. A computer whiz, he found several files that they thought they had "trashed" - but hadn't.

Among these files were a series of letters, some in Russian, written to contacts in Moscow, discussing plans to set up a "consultancy company". The couple's main contact was a St Petersburg businessman called Ilya Baskin. Elena says she introduced Mr Emerson to Mr Baskin. The letters discussed setting up business deals in Central Asia and Kirghizia, and referred to the fact that European Union funding for Russia, known as the TACIS programme, was about to be extended to these areas, which meant it was a "good time" to do business. It is not clear what consultancy services the business would have been offering other than explaining how Western and Russian companies might benefit from EU aid.

Another letter, written by Mr Emerson, was addressed to Stuart Naughton, a tax expert at Coopers and Lybrand, in Moscow. This letter advised Mr Naughton to expect contact with Mr Baskin and told him to arrange for money to reach a series of offshore bank accounts. The most devastating discovery, made by Michel, was a further document describing the plan for the proposed company, as well as the "working conditions" and monthly remuneration of the president. In

addition to a salary and lump sum under this proposal, Mr Emerson would have had a flat or house in Moscow with reliable security, as well as a car, a secretary and several other fringe benefits.

Mr Michel said this week: "I realised when I read that document that this was no love story. I was up against \$1.6 million as well." Neither Mr Emerson or Ms Prokhorova dispute the authenticity of the documents, but both deny any wrongdoing. They simply say they had "plans" to set up the company, insisting no money had changed hands. Armed with the evidence he had accumulated, the American acted quickly, immediately alerting the European Commission fraud watchdogs and the Belgian Police.

The European Commission, which likes to paint its own staff as whiter than white, appeared somewhat dumfounded by Mr Michel's bombshell, but agreed to launch an internal inquiry. They could hardly ignore the evidence which the American had given to them by handing over his computer. "They had 300 megabytes to look through," he says. "Imagine. I gave them everything on that machine - the first draft of my first novel. Can you imagine how embarrassing that was?"

If true, the Commission knew that the allegations against Mr Emerson clearly pointed to a serious case of conflict of interest - or worse. But this US-style whistle-blowing had sent the Brussels Eurocrats scrambling for cover. As the allegations began to emerge,

officials at first huffed and puffed. "It can't be true," they shrugged. "Not Emerson! He doesn't have it in him." Educated at Hurst Pierpoint public school in Sussex, and Balliol College, Oxford, Mr Emerson's reputation appeared to be clean. "Bright but humourless," was how some colleagues described him. He had worked for the Commission since 1973, and had even been an economic advisor to Roy Jenkins when he was the EU President.

Even Mr Emerson's wife, Barbara, seemed flabbergasted. "Michael is very clever, but he can't do anything on his own," she said. "He is good at the world economy but when it comes to paying the bills, I have to do it or the electricity would be cut off." Meanwhile, the Foreign Office in London were quick to let it be known that Mr Emerson was not a "British diplomat". He was, strictly speaking, an EU official, and as such, certainly not one of theirs.

By the beginning of this week, it was apparent that the Commission fraud inquiry had established that the evidence produced by Mr Michel was genuine. The question remained: what to do? On Wednesday a somewhat shamed spokesman, Nicholas Van de Pas, took to the Commission press podium to say that the former ambassador had been granted "early retirement". Mr Emerson's behaviour, conceded the spokesman, had been "deplorable", but there was no cause for disciplinary action. The story may, nevertheless, not

be quite over. The Commission inquiry is still going on and officials are believed to be still hunting down the mysterious Mr Baskin, somewhere in St Petersburg.

Ms Prokhorova said yesterday that she and Michael Emerson, who are living together in a rented Brussels flat, were working on new plans. She said she was bitter about being described as a "Russian temptress" and rejected claims that she had been connected with the KGB or Russian Mafia. She would not comment on whether she and Mr Emerson intended to pursue plans to set up a business in Moscow. "We would love to get married as soon as possible," she said. "The idea of the company only had a 50-50 chance of coming off. Perhaps we will go to New Zealand and grow cabbages."

Yesterday, the heroine of the story, Barbara Emerson, visited the Commission to see if she might qualify for a slice of Mr Emerson's pension. The couple have three children. "I am of a practical disposition," she said bravely. "Poor Michael. I think he will come back to me in the end. He only used to eat packet soup when I wasn't there."

Mr Michel admits that he doesn't really expect Elena to come back to him but he is sure that "she will cheat on Emerson soon". He says he is staying on in Brussels and is planning his next book - and rumour has it, it could be a novel about an American, his wife and her diplomat lover, based in Moscow and Brussels.

## Jo Brand's week

All the old foyes are up in arms about the fact that God is going to be played by a woman in this year's mystery plays in York. A heated discussion ensued on *Question Time* this week, and an audience vote showed that only 8 per cent thought God was a woman. I'm surprised it was as many as that, to be honest. We have all had it drummed into us since the year dot that God is a bloke with a long beard and long white hair. We also have the added problem that lots of men think they're God, whereas most women don't. Given the glut of films recently featuring men in drag, I can't see a problem with a woman playing what is seen as a traditionally male role. At least Christianity should be liberal enough to cope with this idea without going into a homicidal rage.



Mr P: a large, attractive wallet

So Luciano Pavarotti has joined the club of men who dump their wives for their secretaries. I'm sure his attractiveness is down to wallet size, as opposed to anything else. Pavarotti may have gone off his wife sexually some time ago, because these things happen, but I would imagine that he is not the easiest man to negotiate in the sack, either. This doesn't matter if you have a close and enduring friendship, which is what keeps lots of couples together into the separate-beds years. Betrayal of that friendship is far worse than the odd dabble on the side. If I was Mrs Pavarotti, I'd take the bastard for all I could get.

As soon as a film comes out in America, real-life examples pop up all over the place to emulate the behaviour of the characters, thereby becoming the "real-life Bonnie and Clyde", etc. etc. So we have a "real-life Thelma and Louise", so called, because they led the FBI on a five-month cross-country hunt in the US last year. They didn't drive over a cliff, though, so the end was not so exciting. Real life isn't, sometimes, is it?

Two men driving across the country trying to escape from the police wouldn't even merit a mention in most papers, which I suppose demonstrates how unusual it is for women to commit these sorts of crimes.

It's a shame that the two women in the Peugeot advert haven't been apprehended yet and tried in the very irritating ads court. They didn't drive over a cliff either, more's the pity.

Many rich upper-class women, the Princess of Wales included, seem hell-bent on doing good works for charity groups. Why? Is it down to conscience, guilt, frustration or a wish for self-fulfilment? I would imagine much of it may be down to boredom. A visit to the homeless or a chat with the royals? No contest in my book.

I got into a taxi this week and said some words that I will probably never say again: "The Ritz, please." This was because I'd put myself and a free tea at the Ritz up for auction on behalf of an arts foundation set up in the name of



Stuart Sutcliffe, one of the original Beatles, who died tragically young from a stroke. I didn't attend the auction as I couldn't bear the potential humiliation of only attracting a sum under a tenner, from one of my relatives. However, two blokes bid a flattering and sizeable sum. As I went to meet them, all I knew was that they were in "advertising", and I confess my prejudices had made me apprehensive. Yes, I'm afraid I imagined two braving, suited whizzkids with whom I would have nothing in common. I apologise. I was completely wrong. They were intelligent, interesting men with a great sense of humour and I hope they enjoyed it. I did, especially the scones.

I wish the UK had its own version of *Neighbours*, because it would just be a catalogue of disputes between people who can't manage to live together in an adult way. Take the case that unfolded this week at Newcastle upon Tyne County Court, which awarded £15,000 damages and £20,000 legal costs against Mr Paul Telford. A row with his neighbours, Frank and Mary Bray, about barking dogs escalated when Mr Telford acquired a Vietnamese pot-bellied pig with ghastly toilet habits, which caused the Brays great distress because of the odours wafting over the fence.

These rather childish arguments seem to be becoming more common, and are a bad example for everyone else from so-called grown-ups. The

Brays should look on the bright side. At least pot-bellied pigs can't bark. And don't bother to write in and call me one. I'm sure the Sun's Garry Bushell will do it for you.

I'm glad that 29 February only comes round every four years, or we'd have a glut of weather women and local news presenters proposing to their men live on air. It is irritating, too, because we never got to see the men weeping, or running screaming from the studio with a look of terror on their faces.

I didn't propose to anyone, just in case they said yes. Having a husband would ruin my reputation as the man-bating feminist ballbreaker that I am.



Why did they let him go?

Alan Clark, the former minister, who drove his Range Rover (what else would he drive?) through a police cordon while trying to get to a lunch, remarked that everyone in public life ought to be arrested at least once, as an educational exercise. I agree, but I think that some of them, including Alan, shouldn't be let out again. It would save licking up your daughters.

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## Why our innermost thoughts need protection

This week we were subjected to another outburst of intimacy from the Princess of Wales. Apparently she is frustrated in her divorce negotiations, and she thinks they are playing ping-pong with her - whatever that means. We've heard a lot about Diana's innermost thoughts in the past few years: from bulimia to the enemy camp Buckingham Palace, from her desire to be Queen of Hearts to her distress at the stream of battered life. The collapse of the British monarchy under the weight of its many failed relationships is an important cultural and constitutional story of our times. It also happens to be jolly good fun, for newspapers and their readers. As far as the royal misadventure is concerned we need few qualms about prying hacks invading people's privacy and telling their story to the world. The leading protagonists have been tripping over each other to spill their beans to a waiting world.

Why shouldn't we want to know and expect to be told as much as we can stomach about the inner details of the Wales's miserable marriage? After all, we are at the end of a week that has been dominated by the need to make British society more open. This newspaper, more than any other, has campaigned for greater openness in every walk of life. We welcomed Sir Richard Scott's arms-to-Iraq report two weeks ago, with its damning evidence of insidious secrecy in the corridors of power. We called for greater transparency, greater accountability and for a Freedom of Information Act. What's sauce for the Gov-

ernment should presumably be sauce for the Crown too. As long as the machinations of the Royal Family have constitutional implications they are fair game for public scrutiny.

However, as we lay it up, there is something that vaguely worries us about the Royals' enthusiasm for letting it all hang out. Their case is just the most extreme of the rise of public confessionism, using the television screen as the latter day equivalent of the church as the medium for atoning. The case for greater openness in a system of government as closed as the one we have is overwhelming. A society is being driven to be more open by a set of linked forces. Democracy demands openness. Technologies, such as the spread of the personal computer and the Internet are allowing more information to be made available more rapidly to more people. A society like ours, which believes in the market and meritocracy, has to be open about the rules of competition and the standards against which people are being judged.

And yet in this urge to be open are there no costs? Is openness an unalloyed good or is possible that this Nineties fashion for confessionism and disclosure could, taken to the extreme, undermine the very notion of what should be kept private?

Take confessionism first. Charles and Di compete for media space with the famous, the fortunate and the downright ordinary to reveal deep secrets to a national audience. Soap opera stars describe how they have overcome drug addictions. Families admit to their squabbles and their deepest anxieties on *Oprah* and her UK equivalent.



lents. Cilla Black drags millions of viewers away from the *Monday Night Show* every Saturday night to watch strangers meet, date and describe what they like and dislike about one another on *Blind Date*.

If tabloid television doesn't tickle your fancy there are the more genteel versions on Radio 4. Listeners can enjoy highly personal reflections on *Desert Island Discs* or *In The Psychiatrist's Chair*. Every weekend acres of newspaper are taken up with first person columns in which the authors turn their experiences into marketable commodities of the media age.

And then there are the books. Nick Hornby confessing his addiction to football, Giles Smith detailing his obsession with Sting, Blake Morrison picking over his life with his father and this week Madame Mitterrand's revelations about loving a man who seduced a string of young women forms a tribute to her past life with the late French President and includes stories she never shared while her husband was alive.

All this effusive openness has huge advantages. Many forms of therapy - overcoming drug and alcohol addictions, dealing with experiences of rape or child abuse, handling a violent past, or even marriage counselling - involve describing personal experiences and emotions to others. People often find it cathartic and constructive. Watching others admit to illness or emotional problems on television can be extremely reassuring for people - especially men - who would otherwise agonise about the same issues in isolation.

But all this revealing can go too far. Milan Kundera, writing in the *New York Review of Books* last

year and recalling his experience of the way totalitarianism has destroyed private life in eastern Europe, argued that maintaining a private world is essential to sustaining a sense of the individual. "Private and public are two essentially different worlds and respect for that difference is the indispensable condition for a man to live free." The thoughts and reactions we admit to in our heads are very different from the scribbles in a diary for publication. If our private thoughts become crowded out by the need to market and reveal an opinion for public view, then we may lose any sense of a private self.

Kundera fears that the society of private life is once again being threatened in the liberal democracies of the 1990s. This time it is the appetite for displaying the private world for the entertainment of the public.

Certainly relationships suffer from too much public show. Building close bonds with other people depends on being able to single them out for a distinctive form of communication. Lovers become intimate only because they admit each other to a private and privileged world. It is hardly surprising that in the past 12 months a string of so-called celebrity marriages have broken down: the requirements of intimacy for a romantic relationship incompatible if it would seem with the demands of a public role.

Openness is a great good. We do not have enough of it in our political and corporate life, where too often secrecy is the modus operandi. Yet openness in the name of the public only makes sense if there is also a private world to be protected and nurtured. We neglect that at our peril.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Medical negligence: to apologise, to explain, to litigate

From Dr Michael Saunders

Sir: I read with interest Polly Toynbee's article "Legal leeches are bleeding the NHS" (28 February). The Medical Defence Union is contributing to Lord Woolf's review of civil justice and supports any initiative to make the litigation process fairer, faster and cheaper in the interests of our members and their patients.

I would, however, like to take issue with the common misunderstanding, repeated in the article, that "no prudent manager or medical insurer would dream of letting a doctor apologise". This is certainly not our view, and we speak as the UK's leading provider of indemnity to doctors.

Since the mid-Fifties, we have repeatedly advised our members to "say sorry" if something has gone wrong with a patient's treatment. A sincere and honest apology should be made, either by the doctor concerned or, if appropriate, by a senior col-

league. Doctors should not worry about inadvertently making an admission of legal liability, as this is something completely different. The patient is always entitled to a prompt, appropriate and truthful account of what has occurred. Yours faithfully, MICHAEL SAUNDERS, Chief Executive, Medical Defence Union, London, W1

From Professor Roy Sanders

Sir: Polly Toynbee has hit the nail on the head. Screw the NHS by making litigation for medical negligence cheaper and quicker, and justice more accessible, and money will be diverted from medicine to the law; from patients in need of treatment to those who have been negligently treated.

Some "trusters" hammer the doctor by settling actions because it is cheaper than defending them. Where does that leave the doctor faced with

a well-treated but discontented and litigious patient?

Chip away at the trust a patient has in the doctor, wedge the lawyers between the human and apologetic doctor and the patient, and it is plain to see that with increased access to litigation, for the NHS, there's a Woolf at the door.

Yours faithfully, ROY SANDERS, Clinical Director, Centre for Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Mount Vernon Hospital, Northwood

From Mr Michael Napier

Sir: The tranquilliser claims Polly Toynbee refers to were against pharmaceutical companies for failing to warn doctors and patients about the risk of injury to health, caused by addiction and dependency on drugs, at vast expense to the NHS. Soon after the claims were made, a government warning led to a dramatic

reduction in tranquilliser prescriptions at a huge saving to the NHS. And although the liability of the drug manufacturer was never tested at trial, the case was certainly not the no-hoper she suggests.

In her sweeping attack on the legal profession's motives when acting for accident victims, Polly Toynbee also overlooks the fact that nobody can sue for medical negligence (with or without legal aid) unless their claim is supported by the independent evidence of another doctor.

Medical negligence litigation is usually hard fought and not every case succeeds. But each year, numerous victims of medical accidents rightly recover compensation that in total far exceeds the annual amount paid out by legal aid on cases that fail.

Yours faithfully, MICHAEL NAPIER, President, Association of Personal Injury Lawyers, Nottingham

### Civil Service recruitment

From Dame Gillian Brown

Sir: The Government's plan to privatise the Civil Service Recruitment and Advisory Service has had scant publicity, but as a result of questions in the House of Lords it will be debated there on 8 March. I hope the Government will be persuaded to drop the scheme.

The advantages of privatisation for undertakings needing major investment and competition scarcely apply. Earl Howe stated on 25 January that it would free the RAS to compete for business in a wider market. Is that realistic given the multitude of existing agencies?

A stated purpose is to provide a better service with better value for the taxpayer. Is that well thought out? Assurances that civil servants will

retain control over tests for and appointments to "the fast stream" and that audits could lead to a sub-standard RAS losing the contract may allay some anxieties, but the likely outcome seems to be a complicated system involving extra work rather than savings.

In my experience, based on many years in the Diplomatic Service and later as an assessor for the Civil Service Selection Board, our recruitment system has a justifiably high reputation at home and abroad for its integrity and effective assessment methods. Indeed the Government has advanced no specific criticism of the RAS, so why dismantle it? Yours sincerely, GILLIAN BROWN, London, W3

### A millennial Palace of art

From Mr Roger Guedalla

Sir: During a recent week in Republican France, I was reminded that the Louvre had once been a Royal Palace. Could not this set an excellent example to us in Britain, as we search for a great project for the millennium and, at the same time, seek some significant change in the institution of the monarchy?

My suggestion is that Buckingham Palace, already reputed to be unpopular with members of the Royal Family, be turned into one of the world's greatest art galleries by displaying the contents of the Royal Collection. The Queen

herself would move into St James's Palace which was, I believe, the London home of the Royal Family before Buckingham Palace was built.

Not only would this be seen as a wonderful gesture on the part of the Royal Family, leading among other things to a significant reduction in expense, it would also abolish one of the great scandals of our time. What may well be the greatest of all art collections is currently hidden from view with the slight exception of the small annual display in the Buckingham Palace Gallery. It would also provide a permanent and wonderful symbol for the millennium.

Yours sincerely, ROGER GUEDALLA, Ilford, Essex

### In a lather over soap opera pay

From Professor Phil Redmond

Sir: Your article "Brookside" directors in a lather over "miserly" pay" (28 February) is a perfect example of the idiosyncratic artistic interpretation of a dramatic piece. Both your article and its source material, the letter from Fiers Haggard of the Directors Guild to myself, contain cuts to the original work.

Rather than Mr Haggard having had "no reply" to his letter, he was contacted on the day his fax arrived (Friday, 23 February) and was informed that I was away but I would see it on my return. This I did the following Tuesday, with an initial reply reaching him the same date as your publication.

Most of the central characters (directors on *Brookside*) are staff repertory players; they therefore receive the industry staff rates. When staff are temporarily seconded to other projects, their underwrites are on short - albeit expensive - freelance contracts.

One thing I have agreed in correspondence with Mr Haggard is that the "derisory £75" increase could be seen as insulting. It has been withdrawn. Yours sincerely, PHIL REDMOND, Chairman, Mersey Television Company, Liverpool

### Liberal reforms

From Mr Larry McLean

Sir: I agree completely with Alan Black (28 February) on the need for three major reforms - proportional representation, a Bill of Rights, and a Freedom of Information Act.

He says "none of the major parties seem keen to introduce such reforms". For "none" substitute "neither". The Liberal Democrats advocate all the reforms he supports. Yours sincerely, LARRY MCLEAN, Wolverhampton

### Tea's maid

From Mrs Diana Wood

Sir: In the early 1950s, we had a French au pair girl, who was amazed to see us measuring loose tea leaves into our teapot. Throughout her childhood, she had hand sewn and filled muslin tea bags for family use. Her dismay on seeing that it had all been unnecessary was considerable. Yours sincerely, DIANA WOOD, Leigh, Kent

### Mutty humour

From Mr A W Low

Sir: Your article on the emotional lives of animals reminds me of an occasion when I was with our dog, a Labrador-collie cross. Once, when some boys were larking about, the dog ran across barking and scattering the children, but not harming them. He then stood still and I was sure he laughed. Yours sincerely, A W LOW, Brechin, Tayside

## DAVID AARONOVITCH

### The fax factor



Oh how treacherous is technology. It is barely six months since the London *Evening Standard* confessed a faxed article by the former Labour golden boy Bryan Gould with a piece of political journalism penned by the teenage son of the Home Secretary, Michael Howard. But this week a letter of sympathy from Mr Howard's wife, Sandra, to the Tory rebel Peter Thurnham turned up on the fax machine of the *Bolton Metro* News.

The lives of journalists, scrubbing around for good stories of embarrassments to the rich and powerful, would be made immeasurably easier if the following "communications" also ended up in the wrong hands:

Dear Gardner Merchant,

Some additional requirements for our annual garden party. We need another 45 bottles of the Veuve, an extra 50 caviar vol-au-vents (black, not red), and a large selection of cigars (note: Cuban only). I trust that in addition to the comestibles you have remembered the red flags.

Sincerely, Anne Scargill

Dear Jason,

Life is horrible here at St Olive's. The boys are all stuck up, and imagine that their better than everyone else. They spend all their time boasting about limousines, yachts and helicopters, and going to the country at weekends. As for their parents, they are the most dreddful social climbers, all complaining about crime and the decline of community.

What's more I don't think the education here is up to much either. Why o why didn't Mum let me go with you to Grot Street comprehensive?

Yore friend, Joe (Harman)

Dear Richard Shepherd,

Michael has no idea that I'm writing, but I saw you on *Newsnight* and just thought "golly-gosh, isn't this chap brave, defying the whips over that big Scott report thing". I mean, you're wrong of course. And Michael says even a bit unhinged. I know that, but you are soooo courageous.

Faithfully, Sandra Howard

Admirably, Sandra Howard

Dear Auntie Doreen,

I'm that fed up. Yesterday another one of those rallies we keep having to go to; that Cherie Blair posess up to me, dressed like a Wakefield tart, and starts telling me in her le-de-da voice what a hard time she's having. I'm a hard time getting poll-tax defectors sent to jail. And oh, she says cool as a cucumber. I do love your hair, Pauline, so very Satine. Still, as John says, one more election defeat and she'll be going the way of Glenys Kinnock.

Your niece, Pauline

Dear Milkman,

This note is to say that we're all going away this weekend. I've left the back-door open, so that you can put the organic milk and bio-yoghurts directly into the refrigerator. If you wouldn't mind, your money is in the garage, underneath a half-empty petrol can, on the shelf next to the car.

Back Tuesday, Jane Ashdown

Dear Mr Manning,

I wonder if I could trouble you by asking for your autograph. It's my husband's birthday, and he is a great admirer of yours, constantly retelling your jokes at dinners and party conferences.

In anticipation, Carolyn Portillo

Dear Kidsparties,

Draft menu for 12th birthday party. Nothing with beef in it (stuffed full of brain-rot). No eggs (salmonella). No dairy produce (destroys sperms. Problems in later life for boy guesses). No vegetables (DDT). Nothing from the Newbury area (the trees, the cars).

Got it? Ms Cordelia Gummer

Dear Peter Mandelson,

Michael has no idea I'm writing, but I felt I just had to tell you how very much I've enjoyed your new book. It was Michael's copy I picked up and he'd left lots of notes in the margins, saying things like "I completely agree" and "so on". Why have we never met at any party gathering? Perhaps soon.

Admirably, Sandra Howard

### QUOTE UNQUOTE

When I go home nowadays, I get the sort of kindness normally reserved for dead people - Neil Kinnock, *European Commissioner and former Labour leader*

Never attack an opponent when he is killing himself - Gerald Kaufman, *Labour MP*

My mother wanted me to be a nice boy. I didn't let her down. I don't smoke, drink or mess around with women - Julian Clary, *comedian*

Middle age is when, wherever you go on holiday, you pack a sweater - Denis Norden

Twenty years down the line everyone will have forgotten about Diana. She will have joined the list of clapped-out celebrities living in California - David Starkey, *historian*

The Ottoman Sultans would have had her strangled in a bag and thrown into the Sea of Marmara - Norman Stone, *historian*

Everyone in public life ought to be arrested at least once. It is on education - Alan Clark, *former minister, apprehended after allegedly driving through a police cordon in central London*

Oh, crumbsyes, but it's wonderful words - Sir Cliff Richard, *who told that the scene from his musical 'Flashdance' where he kneed singing next to Caty's decomposing body was gruesome*



Run for your life: the Waterloo Cup at Great Altcar

Photograph: John Voos

### Coursing is no 'sport' for the hares

From Mrs Joan Haggard

Sir: Janet George's article "Hunting is good news for hares" (Another View, 28 February) is one of the most chillingly insensitive accounts of any blood-sport I have ever read. She explains the rules and moves of the Waterloo Cup as if describing a contest between a group of equally willing participants.

The only time she mentions suffering is to say that if the hare gets caught there are four "dispatchers" at vantage points to ensure there is no suffering. What degree of suffering constitutes "none"?

Anyway, one might point out that the whole event depends on the hare experiencing enough terror to make it try to escape a violent death. Does not that, in itself, qualify as suffering? Yours sincerely, JOAN HAGGARD, Harpenden, Hertfordshire

From Mr John Bryant

Sir: Janet George of the British Field Sports Society defended the three-day Waterloo Cup hare coursing event on Merseyside on the same day the *Liverpool Echo* published the result of a poll showing that 96

per cent of local people favoured a ban on this event.

A national poll by Gallup in 1990 revealed that 85 per cent of the public oppose hare coursing. In the mid-Seventies, the House of Commons passed a Bill to outlaw hare coursing by a majority of more than 100 - only for it to be blocked in the unelected House of Lords.

For large coursing events, hares have to be netted in other areas and transported to the courting estates, which do not hold sufficient numbers of "active" hares to ensure completion of the heats. For instance, on the first day of this year's Waterloo Cup, 13 hares

were killed - no doubt some of them pregnant or nursing young.

As one cannot transport hares to an estate and then claim they are "pests", the only purpose of hare coursing is "sport".

The Waterloo Cup takes place at the end of February, thus leaving any orphaned leverets to die from starvation or predation. In the interests of animal welfare, wildlife conservation and not least democracy, hare coursing should be outlawed. Yours sincerely, JOHN BRYANT, League Against Cruel Sports, London, SE1

### Rags to riches

From Mr David Gunn

Sir: As a student at a Cambridge college experiencing a rag week, I should like to bring your attention to the appalling difficulty of RAG Challenge.

To enter this supposedly fun event, teams must pay money, which goes to charity, and then try to collect more points than anybody else by completing various challenges. I should especially like to draw your attention to the amount of points received for getting a letter published in a national newspaper before Sunday 3 March - 2000.

Yours sincerely, DAVID GUNN, Churchill College, Cambridge

### Green Labour

From Mr Chris Hewett

Sir: Tony Blair's speech on the environment was far more than a sequence of well-intended platitudes. "A conventional shade of green" (28 February). Traditionally, the Left has been wary of green issues for fear of undermining economic goals. In *Trust for Tomorrow*, the party's policy document on the environment, moved Labour beyond those fears. Tony Blair has now added his approval.

In terms of specific policies, Mr Blair stressed the clear green water between Labour and the Conservatives. The target of reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 20 per cent by 2010 is an ambitious one. Labour's programme of energy efficiency improvements to houses will save far more CO<sub>2</sub> than VAT on fuel, will reduce rather than exacerbate fuel poverty and, according to independent economists, will create 50,000 jobs. The commitment to shifting investment from

road to rail is in stark contrast to the Tory record on transport.

The most important announcement, however, is of a parliamentary "Green Audit" committee. This will help to prevent green issues being seen as an optional add-on and will take environmental concerns to the heart of all government policy.

Yours, CHRIS HEWETT, Socialist Environment and Resources Association, London, N4

Letters should be addressed to Letters to the Editor, The Independent, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL

(Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) and include a daytime telephone number.

Letters may be edited for length and clarity. We regret we are unable to acknowledge unpublished letters.

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# The Independent Weekend



## The Fifties

Michael Bracewell on the lost decade, page 7

### THIS WEEKEND WHY NOT...

#### WALLOW In Wagner

Throw yourself in at deep end and take part in London's mini-Wagner festival: ENO's *Tristan and Isolde* (4pm today) has garnered reviews you couldn't pay for, and Anne Evans is the undisputed star of the Royal Opera's *Götterdämmerung* (4.30pm today). Queue early for day seats or join the returns queue.  
■ ENO (0171 632 8300); Royal Opera House (0171 304 4000)

#### READ

##### The Whitbread Book of the Year

Remember when Jeanette Winterson was funny? Kate Atkinson has all that and no pretentiousness to boot. Glory in *Behind the Scenes at the Museum*, the tale of Ruby and Bunty, her sublimely grumpy mother. Anyone blanching at the cost of hardback fiction will be delighted to discover that the Whitbread Book of the Year is now in paperback.  
■ *Black Swan*, £6.99

#### DISCOVER Bedpan Art

Despised by traditionalists and ignored by the avant-garde, the bedpan remains a spectacularly unexplored resource in world art. Until now. A new exhibition brings together sculptures — including masks and a horse — all made from disposable pans. Will Brian Sewell be there?  
■ Science Museum, London SW7 (0171 938 8000) 10am-6pm; £5 adults, £2.60 concs

#### EAT

##### At Martha's Vineyard

The *Independent's* Restaurant of the Year is outside Colchester and not, as its name suggests, in America. Fresh, local ingredients are combined with a sure touch to produce such delights as roast tomato soup, a warm salad of herring-roe and excellent poultry.  
■ 18 High Street, Nayland, Suffolk. Sat, lunch & dinner; Sun, lunch; £25-£30 approx incl. wine

#### WATCH

##### The Birdies

Woody Allen described pigeons as "rats with wings", but there's more to ornithology than cheap abuse. If your list of bird breeds runs out after robins and sparrows, try visiting the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust. Each Sunday there are guided walks around the 60-acre site, home to 63 species of birds.  
■ Mill Road, Arundel, W Sussex (01903 883355) 9.30am-4.30pm; talks 1.30pm

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## Lie back and think of England.

Just think of all the things you could be doing. Our *Great Escapes* brochures are full of fabulous places to stay and wonderful things to do. Look out for the sign which shows tourist board inspected accommodation. Just call us on 01271 24560 or send the coupon. Then leave the rest to us.



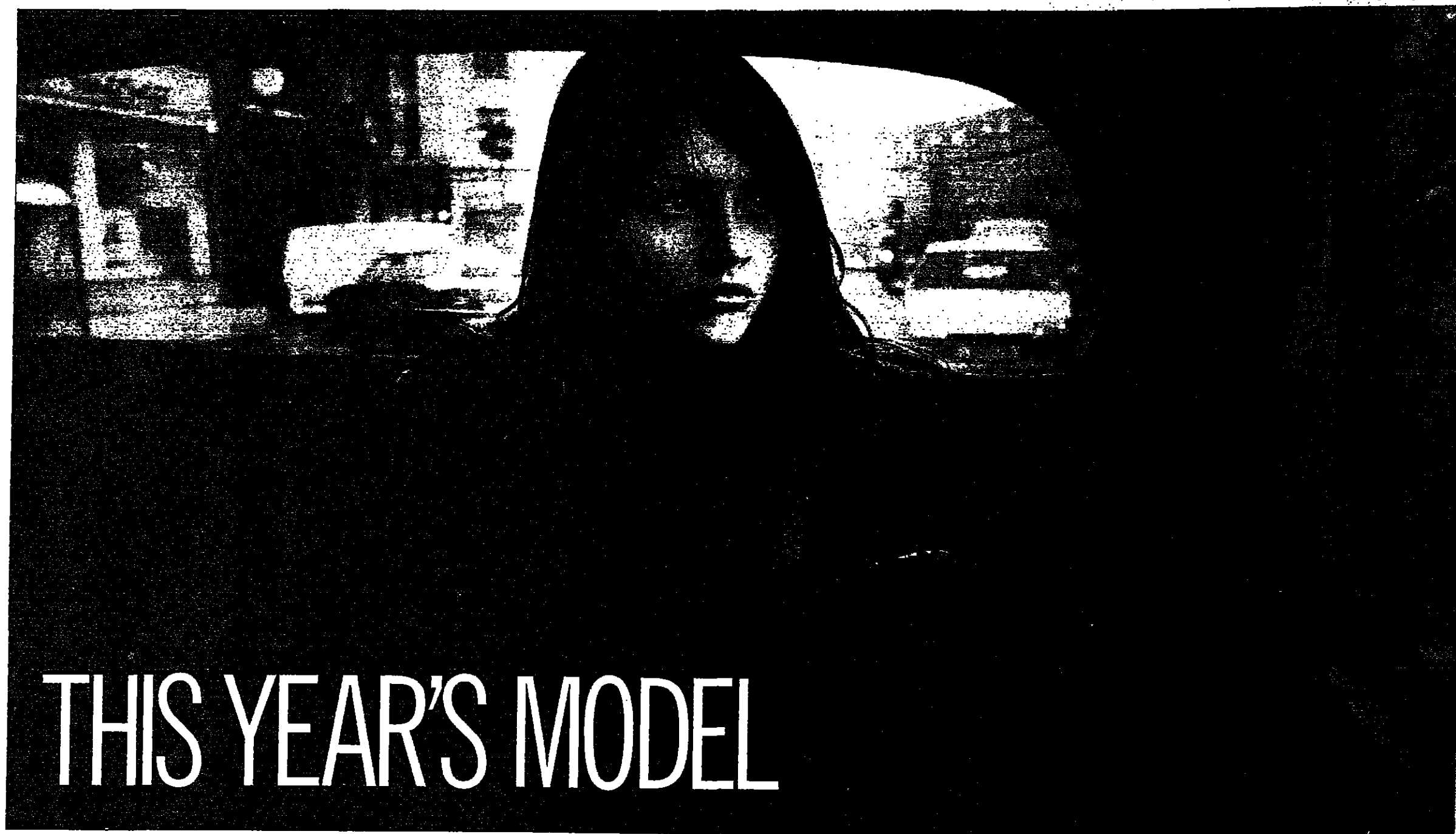
*In the know on where to go.*



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## picture story



## THIS YEAR'S MODEL



Last year, Joanne Watkins, an unknown 16-year-old Cardiff schoolgirl, walked into the offices of Select, one of London's top modelling agencies. She was instantly thrust into the fashion limelight and is now tipped for the top of the modelling world. Edward Sykes kept his camera on her during London Fashion Week



Top picture: London Fashion Week coincides with Joanne's half-term – but it's no holiday. Sight-seeing is confined to peering out of a taxi, and her time is spent rushing between her five main catwalk shows, castings, photo shoots and meetings at Select. In the evening, (above) she unwinds to some A-level homework: if the modelling dream goes sour, her contingency plan is a degree in psychology

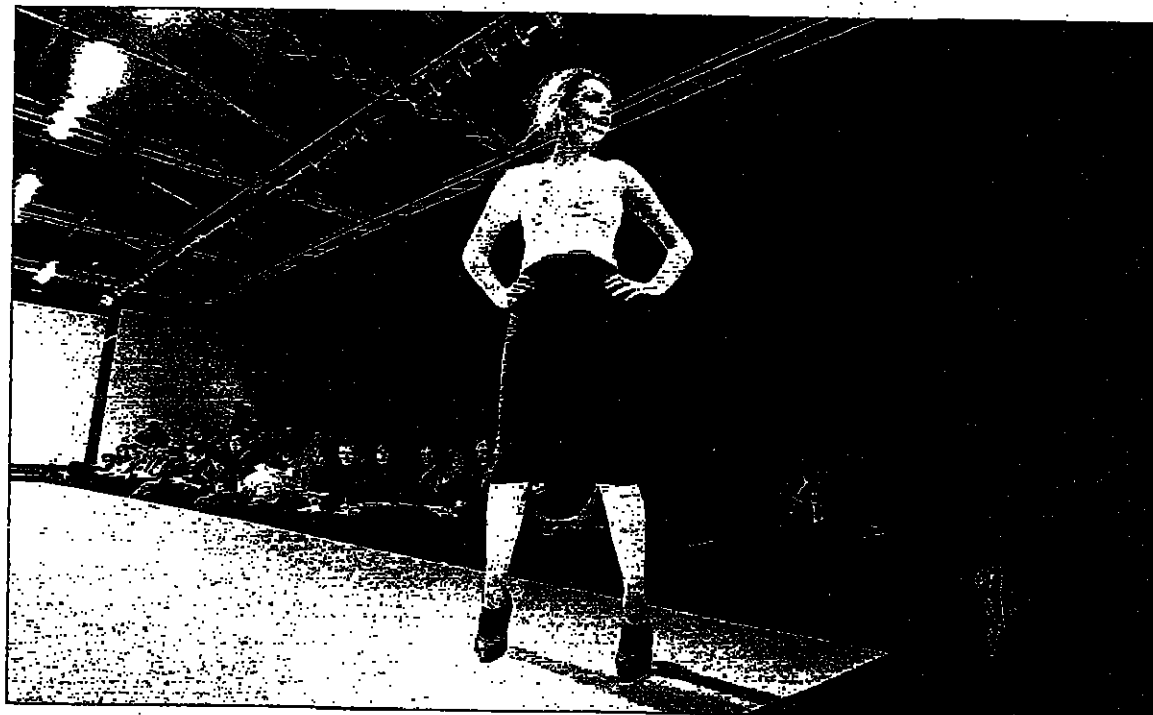
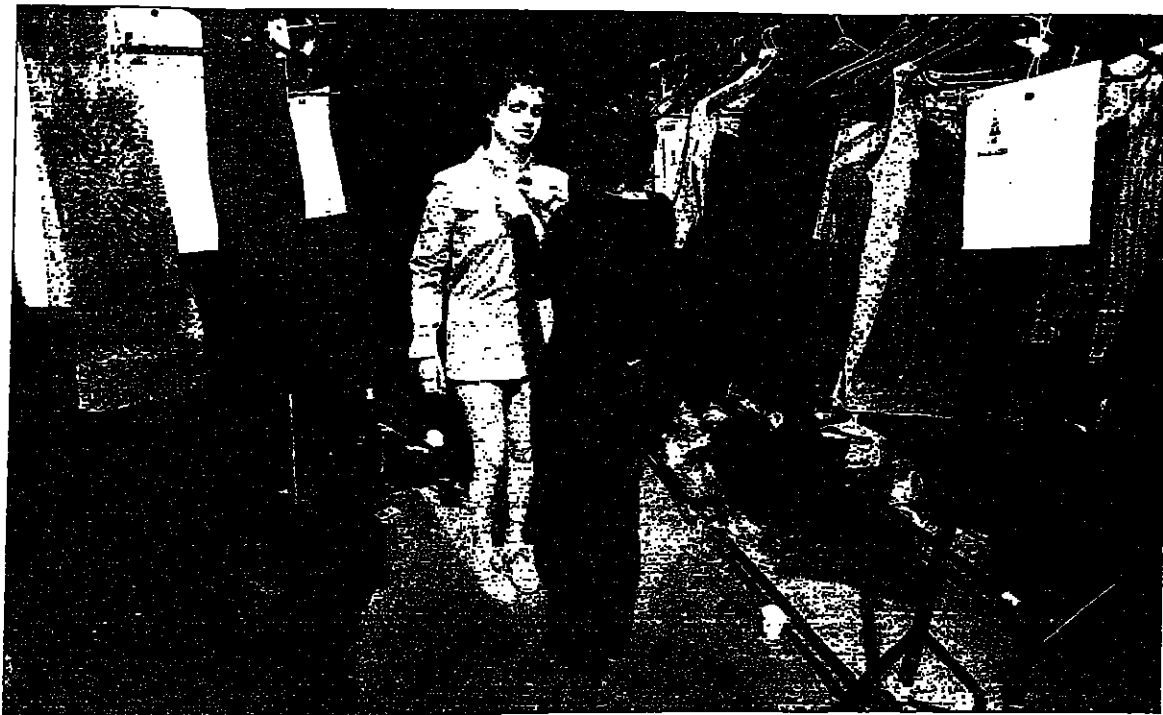
Right: large amounts of hairspray from a previous show are brushed out backstage at the Copperwheat Blundell show (last year's British New Generation Designer of the Year). Models are used to painful grooming, but during London Fashion Week, they can expect to put on violently different styles and catwalk attitudes

Below: being assisted by a dresser into Copperwheat Blundell's street-style clothes. The collections modelled are for autumn and winter. Backstage is one of the few opportunities to chat with fellow models: most are too tired to socialise afterwards



Above: In between catwalk castings, Joanne visits a fashion photographer who studies her book with a view to a possible forthcoming shoot. She can already expect to command up to \$10,000 a day

Below: on the catwalk at the bouney and distinctively feminine Antonio Berardi show. After appearing in the current Gucci advertising campaign for the Spring collection, Joanne Watkins has become one of the faces to watch. As soon as the 32-show week comes to an end, she will jet off to Milan







# Dempster in excelsis

The week the world learnt of the royal divorce found Nigel Dempster, guru of gossip, in his element.

By John Walsh. Photograph by Herbie Knott

**O**n the third floor of the *Daily Mail* headquarters in west London, Nigel Dempster is doing what he does best. Gazing purposefully through his window, which overlooks the electric ribbon of Kensington Church Street, he is explaining to a far-off bit of the Empire what the Royal Family is up to.

"...And he does not feel the British public would put up with him if he married Camilla. Diana? Well, she is not a greedy person. Her brother, Lord Spencer, who now lives in South Africa, told me Buckingham Palace is surprised by the modesty of her demands." As he updates the monarchists of New Zealand on the level of Diana's cupidry, Dempster's voice is inflected with absolute authority, with no quaver of doubt or ambiguity. Only a simpleton, you feel, could imagine there could be any other view of Chuck and Di. Much of what he says is, in fact, supposition (unless, of course, he is telepathically privy to the Prince of Wales's inner thoughts), but what Dempster supposes to be the case counts as the truth in a few million living-rooms.

"Come in! Come in!" he cries, hand over mouthpiece. "Some champagne? I think there's some white wine in the fridge." His empire is surprisingly small, considering that he has been the most famous gossip columnist in the world for at least 20 years. One expects a *chaîne-longue*, a Hugh Hefner penthouse, a scenic elevator... There are just five desks, a rubber plant, photographs from jolly evenings with Peter Stringfellow, Peter McKay and various swarthy beauties. Just behind Dempster's head, the pictures are nearly all of his beloved racehorses, Aardwolf and Pretoria Dancer.

My timing is perfect, for the news has just broken: the Princess of Wales has finally agreed to a divorce and hinted at the terms that will be acceptable to her, and Dempster is in excelsis. He positively bristles with knowledge. You can practically hear a wash of royal tittle-tattle, a quarter-century of stories, scandals, intrigues, rumours, anticipations and reflections flooding through his cerebral cortex. He shoots the cuffs of his pyjama-stripey shirt (Hilditch & Key at a guess), perches like a precise, fastidious Samuel Whiskers on a desk for his portrait, answers the (now endlessly shrilling) phone with easy aplomb. He is as suave as Brylcreem, with just the faintest hint of poison.

After New Zealand, Canada has been ringing for his insights. The American newspapers also seem gripped by the frankly understating news from Kensington Palace. To all of them, he proffers the same firm, just-the-facts routine, giving details of his account in Jersey. I just throw it all away. Of course, he will end up very rich and I won't. "Well, I don't mean Richard Kay, the *Mail* journalist who has car rides with Diana. I mean the family itself. "Well, I've known Andrew Parker-Bowles for years," says Dempster with that

haven't-we-all lift of the eyebrows. "And Diana's brother - when he had that spot of bother with Sally Ann Lawson, he came straight to us." But does he have intimate chats with, say, Princess Margaret, whose biography he wrote (it was published in 1981)? Nigel is evasive. "The sadness of Princess Margaret's life is that she's now very much extraneous to the Royal Family. She said to me in the past, 'The younger ones are growing up and old Auntie won't be needed'."

The odd thing is, we are not here to discuss the Royal Family at all. The occasion of our meeting is the birth of *Dempster's*, a brand new glossy magazine launched on Thursday. A hefty 150-page quarterly, subtitled "Life with Style", it's a marvellously familiar mix of celebrity chat (Liz Hurley and Kenneth Branagh, though not, tragically, together), "Society insight" (druggy marquesses and hotted eurls), fashion and a rather snooty guide to the Season. Imagine *Tatler* with no sophistication or sense of humour and you're there. What's surprising is that the titular Nigel appears on the masthead only as "contributing editor", and contributes little beyond a fooling interview with the Duchess of York about her charities. In fact, he sounds distinctly semi-detached about the enterprise.

"I have an adviser called Neville Shulman," he explains, "who has been looking round for some time for a reputable publishing company, to say to them, do you want to expand your portfolio? It's a mailing by Neville of a publisher and my name and my input. It's basically a magazine for women." Why did he want to do it? "I just think if you don't have a crack, you're not going to get anywhere. As you know, I race horses."

But how does it feel to have a magazine named after him, like Malcolm Forbes? What does it express of the real Nigel? "I think it's just trying to sell a commodity, like Raleigh bikes. People assume it's a good name and go and buy it."

The magazine's subtitle, "Life with Style", is a worrier - not just because it reeks of the lives-of-the-rich-and-famous routines of *Hello!* magazine, but because "style", as monitored through Dempster's *Daily Mail* column, seems such a tacky business. In that morning's *Mail*, for instance, the Dempster page had carried a story, by no means untypical, about two unknown women. "Winston Churchill's former mistress Jan Cushing and actress Marilyn Galsworthy" misbehaving at a restaurant by spending £904.50 on champagne and caviar and sending the bill to their mutual ex-lover. This is the Alexis Carrington school of ditzzy spite. Wouldn't most readers say, "So what?"

"It shows how much gossip has evolved," says Dempster. "That sort of story would never have been written 10 years ago. Those few paragraphs encapsulate all the appalling behaviour that people reading a newspaper want to hear about." He muses on the plight of the Great Unwashed. "They lead humdrum lives, you see, they don't get out much. In that story, I put in what was said, what they ate and drank, the price and the rest of it and I think people are interested in that simply because they say, 'Jesus, is that what's going on in the world?'"

During an hour, coincidentally, the world has been very interested in Mr Dempster. Phone call after phone call demands his view of the Princess of Wales's romantic preoccupations, the likelihood of the Prince's second marriage.

Pink Post-It notes ("This Morning want interview", "BBC World Service TV tomorrow am - pls ring") settle like snowflakes on Dempster's word processor until the screen is wholly obscured. ITN are in the car park...

Then there's an unmissable summons from above. Sir David English, the sainted Editor-in-chief of the *Mail* titles, would like Nigel's two-pennorth on Channel One, his new cable station. Could he oblige? So we trot down the corridors, and ascend to a draughty balcony, where Nigel does his perching routine on a marble buttress in front of a rickety camera and it begins again, the same litany of detail:

"She's obviously got everything she wants. She's got the title. She's got the money. She's got Kensington Palace. She's got the children - so what more could she want? But she's not a greedy person. Her brother, Lord Spencer..." His black moccasins emphasise his unusually small feet, like a ballerina's (he and his wife are keen balletomanes), and he smooths an errant hair over a wayward eorpie with practised hand. There is something inescapably camp about Dempster, an over-emphatic, flaring Englishness shared by Jeremy Brett and Noël Coward, the latter of whom he occasionally resembles (and, while we're at it, with his glasses on he's a ringer for Sir David Frost). You have to remind yourself that the Greatest Living Englishman, in Auberon Waugh's happy phrase, is a foreigner.

Sort of. He's Australian, born in India of a Scottish father and a Cornish mother, a mongrel provenance of which he is clearly proud. "Yes, I am an Australian, and in this job you have to be a foreigner really; you can't sustain the curiosity level if you're part of the whole circuit." He went to Sherbourne (Second term 1955 - I checked in *The Sherbourne Register* which he keeps handily in his drawer) where his best friend was Richard Eyre of National Theatre fame. Open on Dempster's desk is a letter from the Sherbourne School Appeal. "I am so pleased you can join us for lunch at the Cavalry and Guards Club on Wednesday" it begins. Has he always had this devotion to his Alma Mater? Dempster roars. "I was expelled, for God's sake. I was asked to leave. Too disruptive an influence. I would never do as I was told and I had a huge gang of friends, so it felt as if the whole school was being undermined."

After working in Lloyds and the Stock Exchange, he sold vacuum cleaners for a while and drifted into journalism. More to the point, he discovered the *Debs* season in March 1959, the moment from which he traces "my downfall", plunging into a hundred balls, boudoirs and cleavages like a dingo in a dinner jacket. Then he started selling little diary pieces to William Hickey at the *Daily Express*, then he met Lord Beaverbrook at Cowes. His *Mail* column started in 1973 and hits its 23rd birthday this year. "I've seen off 11 William Hickeys," he says with satisfaction, perhaps unable to believe that some people might wish to give up writing gossip in favour of something more serious.

Why, I ask, do people need gossip? What's it for? "I think it's a currency," he says. "It's a way of conversing with people when you're sitting on a train and it's cold or you're in the pub at lunchtime and you've nothing to talk about; it's a slightly more sophisticated version of 'Have you heard the one about?' " But isn't it a sociological thing, about feeling

superior to people who are supposed to be your social betters? "There's an element of having something that puts you in a position of some importance, whether it's a story about a pop group or it's just, 'Have you heard who Diana is with at this precise moment?'"

Actually, Nigel, I was wondering... "The answer is nobody at the moment. After Will Carling there was this chap called Wally, but neither's on her marriage list. I'm pretty sure. She's very lonely at present. In fact, I hear that people are starting to leave the Harbour Club because Diana's always popping up beside them and they don't like it."

How does the column work? Does the stuff about the minor aristocrats come rolling in with every post? "Well, I have lunch with sources every day, of course. But I have literally hundreds of friends and they ring up from all over the world and keep me in touch. They're all like-minded people. A chap'll ring me from New York and say, 'You will never believe what happened last night.' They aren't journalists, but they're people who read newspapers and enjoy gossip, they're old pals of mine and they're doing me a favour and maybe themselves one, too." He would not, on the other hand, refrain from stitching up one of the myriad friends, unless it would prejudice the flow of information. "You have to ask yourself, 'What's the point of shafting a regular provider of first-class information for the sake of one story, when they could be helpful and useful for another 15 years?'"

Over the years, Dempster has noted with irritation that his patch has been well and truly invaded. "When I started in newspapers," he reminisces with a sigh, "gossip was in the gossip columns. Now it's on page one, it's on page 100, it's everywhere. There's sporting gossip, political gossip columns, there's even gossip about estate agencies. The thing that I helped to evolve - well, everything's a gossip column now." Do people still get indignant about appearing in diaries, or has society evolved beyond that? "I don't believe there are things that upset people any more - as with oil spillages, people have got used to them. I'm writing pretty much as I did before. But people's thresholds of what's good and bad behaviour do change. Like when Gerald Ronson came out of prison and was photographed shaking hands with the Queen Mother, one of the papers ran a headline saying, 'Have You No Shame?'. The answer is, there is no shame these days."

I leave, shaking my head sadly over the iniquities of the world. Mr Dempster, the man with a thousand friends whose usefulness provide him with an expensive livelihood and a gloopy magazine in his name and his image, is on the phone again. He is arranging to talk to *Good Morning America* next day and this is a pre-talk briefing. He waves goodbye and his voice settles into the familiar, burnished array of certitudes: "No, she's quite entitled to make these statements on her own, she doesn't have to ask Buckingham Palace. She can do what she wants. Although living almost next door to her at Kensington Palace is her sister Jane, who's married to the Prince's secretary, Robert. Bertie Fellowes. Yes she'll keep the Palace. And the children, of course. But she's not a greedy person." The voice follows you, relentlessly, down the corridor.



## shopping

## Hot little collectables

Howard Hodgson liked Ronson lighters so much that he bought the company. By John Windsor

I could never happen to choose labels or postage stamps. Ronson lighters were recently treated to a champagne and bully-hoo revival at the Blandford Oyster Bar in London's Fulham Road.

Richard Branson was there, together with a bevy of page three girls and Howard Hodgson, the 46-year-old entrepreneur who snapped up the run-down Ronson brand for £10m two years ago. He had pocketed £7.5m from the sale of his share in the funeral company he built up. You would have to bid at least £80m to put him from Ronson today.

At the Blandford bash there was a shortage of stuffy old collecting types – unless you count myself and Eric Knowles, veteran of television's *Antiques Road Show*. He will be staging Ronson roadshows this month in Cardiff, Bristol, Glasgow, Manchester and Birmingham, on behalf of the company. The quest is for the most poignant pieces of Ronson memorabilia, for which British Airways is offering prizes of up to £10,000.

As you search your attic for old Ronson lighters – the value of the scarcest could equal the £10,000 prize money – you might wonder whether the collecting world has gone bonkers. Not at all. The champagne, hired jugglers, flashes of cleavage and the celebration of a spurious Ronson centenary were resolutely commercial.

Ronson lighters, like Swatch watches and Mont Blanc pens, become collectables as soon as they leave the shop. Which is why Mr Hodgson has spent £200,000 building a collection of 100 of the firm's most historic lighters. Dunhill, famously, has already done the same. Collectability confers prestige. Prestige confers profits. So the Ronson revival pays homage to collectors.

Larry Tolkin, owner of America's biggest collection of lighters – including 2,500 Ronsons – is far from bonkers. His psychiatrist has encouraged him in his decision to have his collection put away in store so that he can spend more time with his wife and nine-month-old twins in their Manhattan apartment. Two or three times a week he thumbs through six albums, each containing 100 photographs of his beloved lighters. "I used to go antiquing every weekend," he told me, "but I felt relieved when I put the collection in store. I don't need to touch them all the time like some collectors do." Among the rare classics that Mr Tolkin has sold to the Ronson collection are: for \$650 a Penguin Pikacig table lighter from 1934, for \$800 a heart-shaped pocket lighter of 1937, and for \$250 each, two rare 1935 chromium-plated table lighters in the form of an elephant and a bull.

Mr Hodgson is too shrewd to be tempted to buy the entire Tolkin collection. "I'm very reticent about spending shareholders' money in that way," he told me. "I'm sure we could sell the collection on at a profit but I'm not in the antiques business. I aim to turn Ronson into an accessible brand not only of lighters but of other made grooming products – watches, pens, shavers, etc." He has

nevertheless laid out £4,000 for a rare early silver bell-shaped table lighter. It does not work.

The most timely bonus in the Ronson collectables revival is the Art Deco craze. Up-market Dunhill may have the hand-tooling, but Ronson has the Deco flair. Pre-war female Deco figures in the manner of Zach, Preiss and Chiparus command big prices. The Californian Urban K Cummings, author of the definitive Ronson lighter guide, told me he had seen a Ronson Egyptian girl table lighter with a \$2,000 tag at a recent collectors' convention in Los Angeles. Even in this country, one could fetch £1,200. The Ronson collection has one.

Mr Cummings knows of three copies of Ronson's legendary Charlie Chaplin table lighter of 1920. One is in his safe deposit. None are known in Britain. This is the model that could bring £10,000 if offered internationally. The Americans have an estimated 1,700 lighter-collecting club members and the Japanese and Italians are avid buyers.

So if your attic happens to yield half a dozen Egyptian girls and half a dozen Charlie Chaplins you are in for a bonanza. Table lighters are generally worth more than pocket lighters. But do not raise your hopes if you have common table models such as the oval-shaped Queen Anne, whose production peaked at 15,000 a week between 1936 and 1959. They change hands for a fiver or less.

The Lighter Club of Great Britain has only 200 members, but the hobby is strong enough here to support mail order catalogues and five dealers at Bermondsey's Friday morning market. One of them, Tom Clarke, makes four trading expeditions to the United States and four to Europe every year.

Will Mr Hodgson's revival send prices through the roof? For rarities, yes. But prices of run-of-the-mill lighters will probably go down. Publicity will increase demand, but there will probably be an avalanche of ordinary lighters on to the market that will more than satisfy it.

According to Mr Knowles: "This market is in its infancy. Lighters will always be sold among collectors, but the big test will be how they fare at a dedicated auction in the open market." Ronson plans an auction in August. Bonhams, of which Mr Knowles is a director, is pitching strongly to be the auctioneer.

Ronson Roadshows at British Airways Travel Shops (10am-4pm): Cardiff 6 March, Bristol 7 March, Glasgow 25 March, Manchester 26 March, Birmingham 27 March (0171-630 1411). "Ronson, the World's Greatest Lighter: Wick Lighters 1913-1966", by Urban K Cummings, last 250 copies, hardbound, \$79 plus p&p \$7 or \$24 airmail (001-415-3280329). Tom Clarke, dealer: Bermondsey market Fridays 6am-12 noon, Portobello market Saturdays 7am-3pm. Lighter Club of Great Britain: Richard Ball, 351a, Whitehorse Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 2HS.



Top: Howard Hodgson with part of the Ronson collection. Above: a rare 1936 bartender lighter. Right: one of the legendary 1920 Charlie Chaplin lighters, worth about £10,000. So far none of them have turned up in UK attics. Photo (top): Gerald Lewis



A life in the shift of...  
Tina Mabbott, day leader,  
Save the Children charity  
shop, Shrewsbury

"I may be in my seventies – my exact age is top secret – but with the Rotary Club Inner Wheel (the club for wives of Rotarians) coffee mornings and Conservative Ladies' Association luncheons I don't have much time, so I only work Tuesday afternoons. I've always done some sort of charity work. I was a League of Friends Hostess at Shrewsbury Hospital for years and John – my husband – is very involved with the Spastics Society.

Ruth, our head lady, is very fussy about till errors and cheques. She's always leaving notes on the wall about new rules. We have a very modern till which took me ages to learn how to use. I'd tap in £1 and it would say £10,000. You're not supposed to keep the door open, but when there are lots of people and lots of clothes, you can get a terrible fuggy smell. "Someone could pinch something," says Ruth. "Yes, dear," I say, watch her leave and then open the door. Joyce and I sometimes go around the whole shop with the Haze spray.

It's amazing the different sorts of people we get in. Odd types with strange things through their noses and funny old people who shuffle around. There is one lovely lady with a big red puffy face who always buys huge shirts for her husband.

Mid-afternoon, one of the girls (I say that, but the youngest is in her forties) will get out some biscuits and we'll have a break and a chat in the back, where the clothes get sorted and a dear old lady does nothing but iron.

I've taken a lot of stuff into the shop recently. Our house is up for sale and I'm sorting through the attic. All my knick-knacks go immediately, but I've stopped taking clothes – Christine's lovely wedding outfit with matching shoes and hat which everyone said was absolutely super and would go in no time at all hung around for ages. I saw one person just shove it on and off. I couldn't bear it. My lovely evening frock ended up in the 60p bargain bin.

Before closing the girls get the carpet sweepers out. I don't know who on earth vacuums because we certainly don't. I see myself working in the shop for a good few years yet. I enjoy meeting the customers – some of the men are so nice; and I love being with the girls. We may not be on the High Street or have the double windows of Oxfam, but I think we do our bit."

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## Books

FRENCH LANGUAGE MAGAZINE  
FOR UK READERS

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# Is it some sort of identity crisis? Why else would a grown man want to festoon his person with the alphabet?

By Louise Levene

**M**elanie Eastwick had nametapes in her knickers. No one knew why. Quite what picture her mother had formed of the life was never spelled out but, whatever happened, Deirdre was prepared. The same mystery surrounds the monogramming habit. What do people imagine is going to happen to their pillow cases? Even for the tiny handful of starch queens who send their laundry out, the monogram serves no practical function: laundries mark dirty linen with their own system of cabalistic signs: your button-downs are not being sorted by the any-three-initials you paid £3.50 to have stitched on to the breast pocket.

He climbs out of his BMW (numberplate ESN 1) strolls towards you, combination locked briefcase in hand, the tooling of his maximum-three-initial monogram glinting in the spotlights of the hotel lobby. On his pinkie a two initial ring, at each cuff monogrammed links, his shirt pocket emblazoned with the now familiar logo. Is it some sort of identity crisis? Why else would a grown man want to festoon his person with the alphabet? Perhaps in the hope that the handy mnemonic will awaken in you the memory of a previous meeting. Perhaps he can't remember his own name?

Monogramming is now available in every catalogue you open but has its roots in an older, far more aristocratic tradition, in which plate and linen would be branded with some device to prevent theft and speed up the audit should any of the gear ever pass out of the family at weddings and funerals. It aided identification during the extended family wash and saved squabbles at inns or house parties – travelling without one's own bed linen in the 18th century was unthinkable. Such monogramming still persists in aristocratic establishments where coronets hover grandly over the initials. Unlike the bottom-drawer tradition of the middle-class trousseau, aristocratic linen usually passes through the male line. Should the toff in question marry again the needle-

woman faced the thankless task of unpicking her work and stitching in the new wife's initials – and you wonder why they're all called Caroline. Middle-class monograms were solely to aid in sorting laundry.

Wendy Hefford, deputy curator of Textiles and Dress at the V&A calls attention to *The Workwoman's Guide* of 1840, which recommends the owner's initials followed by the code B for Best, F for Family and S for Servants. Ornamental white work was originally reserved for things that would show, like handkerchiefs, but by the end of the 19th century there was a vogue for larger, more elaborate displays.

The marking of linen had fallen out of favour by the middle of this century, when needlework teaching was in decline and high labour costs made hand embroidery a prohibitively expensive luxury. The development of new technology made machine monogramming quick and easy and led to a revival in the practice of personalisation. Suddenly a bog-standard catalogue purchase could be given that special something by the addition of a few inches of satin stitch. The naughtiness of monogramming is confirmed by the Duchess of York's fondness for it. Her wedding dress, you may remember, sported a gigantic hand-headed A entwined with an S on the bum.

Outside what Liz Elvin of the Royal School of Needlework affectionately dubs "The Households" there is little call for hand sewn work, although the school will still do it – at a price: three inch-high initials will set you back £60. Back in the 1920s they did all the Queen Mother's trousseau. No doubt should her knickers ever be knocked down at auction they will be identified by the stitchwork – the only reliable means of identifying the many pairs of Queen Victoria's drawers that find their way into the salerooms.

Machine embroidery has devalued the monogram of its cachet. The White House, the London linen specialist, feels that the whole business has become rather devalued. "It's not frightfully English. It's now considered not quite the thing. I think the Americans have rather done it in."



The American appetite for initialled bric-a-brac is almost insatiable. Opinion is divided on the social status of the monogram in the US. Lisa Birnbach, author of *The Preppy Handbook*, claimed that it was good news but Paul Fussell, author of *The Waspish and snobby Cast*, Marks felt that all visible lettering is a sign of lower-class insecurity. The desperate need to personalise everyday objects, he argues, springs from a misguided attempt to ape the upper classes.

In fact, even the Americans aren't as keen as they were, with only 15 per cent of the White House's transatlantic trade requesting the full personal treatment. Or maybe they just begrudge spending £10 for each letter done by a hand-driven machine. The new generation of sewing machines do it far more cheaply and can run off a few letters in seconds. With the serious machines you can programme in a crest and initials of baroque complexity and have it stored for future use.

Eximious, a Belgrave boutique, gives linens a wide berth – "It's so non-L to have monograms on shirts", a belief confirmed by the fact that Johnny Bryan sports

his initials on his breast pockets – but will gladly slap your name on anything from a champagne stopper to a coat hanger. Their speciality is the christening and wedding present market – and very lucrative it is, too. Their American mailing list has swelled to five million. Eximious proves once and for all the exact social status of monogramming: it has a royal warrant from the Prince of Wales. Charles apparently likes to have his luggage gold blocked. Why? In case it gets lost and ends up in Karachi? Mind you, it might enhance the resale value. Indeed, if Forgie has had the forethought to have her trousseau monogrammed she might just be able to pay off the overdraft.

## Doing it yourself:

John Lewis sells sewing machines that monogram. The New Home Memorycraft 4000 has a pre-set alphabet and costs £775. More sophisticated machines can be programmed with any design if you buy a scanner (around £500). Elna Envision £1,550 or Brother Super Galaxy 2 £1,800.

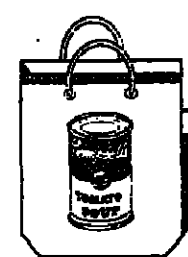
**The Royal School of Needlework** (0181-943 1432) offers courses ranging from a day to a year in length. A day's needlework lesson costs £36.

**The Dover Bookshop**, 18 Earham Street, London WC2 (0171-836 211) sells books of decorative monograms.

Harrods will engrave jewellery, lighters and crystal at a rate of £12.50 for two initials. Towels and linens can be mono-grammed in three weeks; £6.50 for three one-inch initials.

**Eximious**, 10 West Halkin Street, London SW1 (0171-235 7828). Supplies anything and everything that is monogrammed, for example three children's beechwood coat hangers with name on, £19.50, a leather chewing-gum holder, £13, or a silver champagne stopper with one initial, £26.50.

**The White House**, New Bond Street, London W1 (0171-629 3521). Hand-embroidered lawn handkerchiefs with one initial, £7.50.



## bazaar

### Good thing

Susan Lethbridge  
tapestries, £13.95

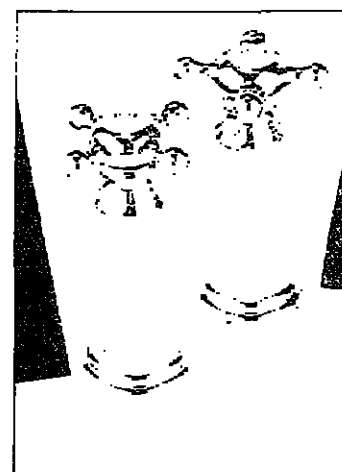
Most children's tapestry kits feature teddies and kittens in icy shades of pink and blue. Instead, Susan Lethbridge does humorous designs of farm and jungle animals in bold colours. Our favourites were the cockerel (right) and a fat orang-utan eating a banana. The stitch is ultra simple and at 12 stitches to the inch you can fill the space quickly. Make up the end product into a cushion with a wild gingham backing. Send for a catalogue to Susan Lethbridge Tapestry Designs, Honeycomb, Simonsbath, Nr Minehead, Somerset TA24 7JX (0164 383 1348).



### Mad thing

Bath tap salt and pepper  
mills, £19.95 a pair

If conversation at your dinner parties is prone to dry up, these bath tap salt and pepper mills are guaranteed to supply at least another half a minute of lively conversation. Unscrew the cold for salt, the hot for pepper. Mail order only from Gizmo & Widget, PO Box 3983, London SE22 0RO (0181-299 0891).



### Checkout

### Muji

**Concept:** Japanese minimalism, what the novelist Douglas Coupland defined in *Generation X* as "the most frequently offered interior design aesthetic used by rootless career-hopping young people". What Japanese minimalism means in practice is paying £2.75 for 20g of imported seaweed salad. Dinky packaging, though, rust-red on white, and with real Japanese writing, too!

**Image:** A Japanese Heals? Or an Oriental version of Woolworth's? They really should make up their minds. **Stock:** A few clothes (often in stereotypically small sizes); chi-chi stationery; Spartan bathroom-ware; and basic kitchen utensils, many of which are made of aluminium (don't mention the words "Alzheimer's disease"). Upstairs there's an obligatory futon, but most of the other bits of furniture – and storage boxes – are made either of cardboard or MDF (medium-density fibreboard), which looks like varnished chipboard but costs about 17 times as much. MDF? MFI more like.

**Customers:** On the afternoon we went, they seemed to consist of polo-necked Europeans, looking like extras from the latest Kiesowski film, and one distinctly puzzled looking Japanese tourist. Surely his yen should have got him more soap to the pound than this (three bars cost £2.60, reduced from £3.95).

**Best buys:** Muji cola – a talking point in your fridge for just 45p. "Their underwear's very good," a female friend advises. **Worst buy:** 30 grammes of dried veg (£2.75).

**The Muji game:** Every so often Muji neglects to label a product in English. Is it a Zen paper clip? A ramen stirrer? An implement to remove stones from Japanese horses' hooves? Questions like these offer hours of fun for all the family.

**Where can I find one?** Muji has branches in London, on Shelton Street, Kensington High Street and Carnaby Street, and in Glasgow. It also has concessions in Liberty stores. For further information call head office on 494 1197.



## AUCTIONS

Following the revelation here last week that 666, the Biblical number of the Beast, had been released for sale to numberplate buffs by the Government's Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, two drivers have reported to me – with a degree of horror that can only be guessed at – that their cars bear the devilish digits. Nadia Dean of South Woodford, London, has G666 WMH and Ken Parkin of Holmfirth, West Yorkshire, has FRC 666V.

Very likely, says the DVLA. Before the prohibition of 666 in 1991, fate was free to bestow the code number of the Beast on hapless new vehicles as it chose. The number's new availability is exclusively through the DVLA's telesales and auctions. It is still never routinely assigned to new cars.

The DVLA has a bulging file of pleas by pre-1991 motorists to rid them of the baleful influence of the Beast by changing their numberplates. Some complained that the sight of 666 appeared to provoke other motorists to bump into them. "My business problems have become extremely seri-

ous," wrote one, "and may result in closure. This after 25 years trading will you please allow dispensation for a change of number plates."

Whitefriars glass prices, tipped to "go mad" on this page last week, made a predictably loopy start at Sotheby's sale last Monday. A lot of seven modern faceted Whitefriars paperweights, estimated £250-£350, brought gasps as the price soared to £1,438. The next lot, eight modern millefiori Whitefriars paperweights with the same estimate, made £943.

New names are always welcome in the depressed modern pictures market. The cover of Sotheby's catalogue for Wednesday's mid-season modern Brit and Irish sale (10.30am) shows the young Mick Rooney's *Seaside Cafe* of 1992 (£10,000-£15,000), a fly-on-the-wall view of an old woman in a flower-decked straw hat sitting at a bright yellow Formica table as a waiter drops a plate in the swirlingly hysterical interior. Rooney's work is seldom seen at auction. William Roberts's *Fifties painting The Birth of Venus* – buxom blonde nude appears before sunburnt fishermen – is a face we have seen somewhere before. Now estimated at £30,000-£40,000 it fetched £82,500 on the crest of the boom in the same saleroom in May 1990. Those were the days.

John Windsor

## The best crisps in the world

By Gina Cowen

A few weeks ago my mum and I were driving up to Scotland to visit some relatives we'd never met. That we never even knew we had. Discovered by complete chance during a phone conversation with a listed buildings planning officer on behalf of a Polish friend who was thinking of buying some remote Scottish cottage. The guy turned out to be my second cousin.

On the way up it was only by complete chance that I bought a packet of Seabrook crisps. Stopping off to fill the car just south of Gretna Green I wanted a sandwich. The selection was very sad. I picked up a packet of crisps instead. Spring Onion. Seabrook. Never heard of them, but a nice packet. A Forties design. No lurid colour clashes. No lure of an instant £10,000. Just a packet of crisps. We shared it, my mother handing me crisps while I drove. They lasted about 15 seconds. I suggested we might go back for another couple of packets but a) you can't U-turn on a motorway and b) Mum said "Darling!"

They were the best crisps I'd ever eaten. Previous affairs (with Walkers and Kettles) were over. I kept a surreptitious but unsuccessful Seabrook alert on our short visit to Scotland, and then contrived a stop

on the way down just south of the border. There we were directly opposite the first station. But the station on our side didn't stock Seabrook crisps. This overwhelming urge came over me. As I don't normally risk my life for under 30p I ran across the motorway and bought 25 packets and then ran back. My mother had gone white.

They are crisp, of course. Crinkle cut and sprinkled with sea salt. Thin but not wafer thin. On the packet it says "more than a snack". I think this is because you end up eating about 10 packets. They come in 17 flavours: Original (ie. sea salt), Cheese and Onion. Salt and Vinegar. Prawn Cocktail. Spring Onion. Beef. Smokey Bacon. Canadian Ham. Cheese. Cream Cheese and Chives. Garlic & Herb. Indian Tandoori. Mexican Chilli. Pickled Onion. Roast Chicken. Tomato Sauce. Worcester Sauce. My favourite are Original, followed by Spring Onion, Smokey Bacon and Canadian Ham.

Seabrook are available from the Scottish border to the north Midlands. You can find them in parts of East Anglia, the South Coast, the West Country and Central Scotland. But London? Our loss.

Jack Harrison the sales director

has been with the company for 25 years. He gives the impression that this Bradford-based family business has a certain modest pride in its product. Started in the late Forties by Charles Brook, the business evolved from his fish and chip restaurant, the famous Seabrook Fisheries. The name? The story goes that Charles was picking up some holiday snaps on the Isle of Man and they'd written Seabrook instead of C Brook. Colin Brook the son is now chairman. Richard the grandson is joint managing director. Granddaughter Jane is financial director (and married to a Mr Chrispin). In the past 30 years the company has grown tenfold. There are now 22 ultra-equipped factories in Bradford and at Allerton and Princeville.

All is not lost for us down South. Mr Harrison has a mail order book. For £11.05 (incl. p&p; call 01274 546415) you can order a box of 48 packets of any flavour or any mix. That's about 22p a packet. Delivered to your door. "A bit unorthodox," he confesses. Bless you, Mr Harrison. I mentioned this exciting new discovery to a friend who had gone to school up North. She said: "Seabrook? But of course. The best crisps in the world."

## NO SOFT DRINK



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## arts

It is 11pm at the Groucho Club party to celebrate John Rocha's catwalk triumph at London Fashion Week. I am cornered, somewhere between Van Morrison and Boy George, by Elaine, a drunken stylist from *Murphy's Law*. "Boy George, He really should change his name to... um... Bow Pork. Look at him. Talk about fat. Who the hell dresses him anyway?"

"Voyage," she slurs. "Comme des Garçons. That's what he should be wearing."

"Maybe he dresses himself," I suggest.

"Believe me, sweetheart," says Elaine. "One doesn't dress oneself at a John Rocha party. You approach designers, you think about it, you get advice."

"So what does one wear at a John Rocha party?" I ask.

"John Rocha," she replies. "It is considered polite."

Pretty soon, Van Morrison and Boy George do a song, which, unfortunately, neither of them know. In tribute to John Rocha, it gets a big cheer, as one would expect, especially as everything tonight is getting a big cheer. When John Rocha walks in, he gets a big cheer. He gets a big cheer when he sits down. When somebody says: "Ladies and gentlemen - John Rocha!" he gets another big cheer. When he says: "Thank you," he gets a huge cheer.

We are all thrilled, especially John Rocha, who says: "I'm thrilled!" and everybody cheers. It would be easy to make friends tonight - all you'd have to do is holler: "John Rocha!" and you would immediately be wholeheartedly



DICKIE FANTASTIC on the schmooze

applauded and welcomed into fashionable society. "That's Van Morrison," whispers the lady in front of me queuing for the bar. And the whispers go frontwards and backwards, and pretty soon the whole queue is jabbering about nothing else. Van Morrison is at the back of the queue, waiting for a drink and together we are united in our combined quest to have a drink.

This moment of harmonious rapture lasts exactly 30 seconds, at which time Van Morrison storms elegantly through the throng - as is his unquestionable right as a personage of celebrity - and takes his place at the front of the queue. We allow it, of course: we grin and part. There is absolutely no doubt in anyone's mind that Van Morrison deserves to go to have a drink before us. He is after all, Van Morrison.

And then, a moment later, the spell is broken. "Did you see what that bastard just did?" mutters the lady in front of me. "What a bastard," replies someone else. "Who does he think he is?"

"It's only Van Morrison, for God's sake," says another.

"Bastard," we all agree. And then Van Morrison emerges from the front of the queue, elegantly, clutching a drink, and we all smile ingratiatingly.

## If we are to confer a gift on future generations, it should be something bold but practical

"If an earthquake were to engulf England tomorrow," the popular Victorian author Douglas Jerrold once wrote, "the English would manage to meet and dine somewhere among the rubbish, just to celebrate the event." Jerrold was making fun of the Victorian passion for jubilee and jamboree, a commitment to civic festivities that has bequeathed to us endless photographs of top-hatted dignitaries taking a 14-course meal in the Greenwich Foot Tunnel or inside the western tower of the Saltash suspension bridge. For Jerrold the British displayed a sort of national genius for commemoration, however inappropriate or temporary the object of their celebration. But we have lost the knack, it seems. Simon Jenkins, who is one of the Millennium Commissioners, the body responsible for dispensing some £1.6bn of lottery funds, has reportedly expressed disappointment at the unimaginative nature of most of the bids he and his colleagues are receiving.

I will confess myself to having a small fantasy about the millennium, one based on the equally illogical glee with which children wait for the mileometer in a car to tick over from 9,999 miles to 10,000. Like the millennium, this event is purely numerical - the mile that succeeds is exactly the same as the mile before it, the inside of the car just as tedious as it was before. And yet the chorus line of numbers seems to mark a moment of significance, to offer a reprieve from boredom. In my recollection of this experience,



THOMAS SUTCLIFFE

though, we almost always missed the transition - we would be warned that it was on its way, stare dutifully at the tumbling succession of digits and then be distracted by something more interesting out of the window. When we remembered to check again it always seemed to have moved on, to 10,002. My occasional daydream is that the same might happen with the millennium, that the current frenzy of anticipation will give way to boredom and that half-way through 2002 someone will say, "Oh no! We missed it!"

It won't happen, naturally, which means that we have to address ourselves to the question of how best to extract value for money from the huge sums to be spent on celebration. And it seems to me that any decent scheme must sit on one of two extremes - it must itself be millenarian in its ambitions, aiming at a durability measured in hundreds of years, or it must be determinedly transitory, an event designed to have a firework's lifespan, but to leave a glowing after-image in the mind's eye. The Crystal Palace provides an interesting case history in this respect - a prodigious achievement of Victorian technology which lived beyond its designed lifespan. Paxton's building was, literally, a crystallisation of Victorian engi-

neering confidence - a building of such imaginative audacity that it forced new building techniques to be developed. But it was not intended by its creator as a permanent building. The ingenious and efficient guttering, for instance, which carried away rainwater and internal condensation, was made out of oak - a fact that contributed to the building's final immolation. But without that fire the legacy of the Crystal Palace would be very different - an embarrassment in Sydenham rather than the most glorious glasshouse ever. There are few things more bleak than a pavilion that has outlived its purpose. Go and look at the Alexandra Palace if you doubt it.

The lesson that the Crystal Palace teaches is that permanent memorials must be flexible, must be able to bend themselves to changes in use and reverence. There is a scheme that already exists which meets all the necessary criteria. It is bold but practical and would leave a durable legacy. This is Richard Rogers's plan (already worked out in considerable detail) to transform the banks of the Thames by burying the traffic of the Embankment beneath a park and stitching the two sides of the river together with new bridges. If we are to confer a gift on succeeding generations it should be something like this, not one that will grow old to embarrass them but one that will simply grow.

At the other extreme, that of exuberant but temporary joy, there is already a private scheme well advanced - the proposal for a Mil-



Walking on ice: a 17th-century pleasure

Mary Evans Picture Library

lennium wheel on the South Bank of the river. But I would like to propose another - one that draws its inspiration from the most tantalising of historical jubilees. London should have another ice-fair - should intoxicate itself with the marvel of walking on water, a pleasure provided for free in the 17th century, when the combination of icy winters and restricted flow through London Bridge allowed

the Thames to freeze over and carnival to spill out of narrow streets. These days we couldn't rely on nature to do the freezing - but the obvious site is perfectly placed - Millwall Outer and Inner Dock, at the heart of the Greenwich site, perfectly served by the London Docklands Railway. Best of all, when the celebrations were finished it would melt away, leaving no trace but a memory of delight.

## reviews

THEATRE *The Ends of the Earth*, Cottesloe, London

Your baby daughter is gravely ill and you, a heavy smoker, are led to believe that you can save her life by forswearing fags. That's the fraught, fable-like situation facing the protagonist of David Lan's new play *The Ends of the Earth*. An English geologist at work on the construction of a dam in an unnamed Balkan state, Daniel (Michael Sheen) has started to crack up badly. His wife (Samantha Bond) has had to leave her sick baby and fly out to persuade him to come home. He's informed that there's an old wise man who wants to help him; their encounter ends with the encounter against smoking.

There's a compelling novel by Brian Moore called *Cold Heaven* in which the heroine is lashed with a similar plight. The husband she was just about to leave becomes dependent on her agreeing to play Bernadette to recurrent apparitions of the Virgin Mary. It's a more awkwardly intimate and intense sacrifice that is demanded here, one nicely calculated not to alleviate the self-obsession that the audi-

ence might diagnose as Daniel's chief problem.

The trouble with this often gripping piece is its failure to establish a strong enough sense that the central couple are, first and foremost, loving, grievously worried parents and that it's from this anxiety that all the self-referring guilt and festering introspection springs. The baby, however, is so palpable a presence in either the piece or in Andrei Serban's otherwise tremendous traverse production that you begin to think she's wholly a projection of her parents' problems rather than a human being in her own right. She exists only to the extent that she can be used to set up the facile irony that it's her father who is really sick.

The same is largely true of the civil strife we witness between the Balkan mountain people and the valley people. Daniel's dam has exacerbated this, since the water will cause dispossession and will flood the site of an historic battle. Just as the question of the baby's life is subordinated to her father's existential pilgrimage, so the predicament of

the Balkan people seems to be dramatised principally to illustrate to Daniel the contradictions and conundrums of responsibility. It also steers the play into hollow melodrama. In the worst scene, Daniel is forced to smoke again to save the life of a captured beaten man. "They killed my sons! Your daughter is alive. Why should yours live and mine die?" cries the perpetrator of the situation. At such moments, the play seems to have all the human interest of an algebraic equation.

Samantha Bond, as the wife, copes heroically with some pretty ungrateful dialogue: "My darling, my sweet, the man I care about and love, really love, adore. I'm your friend." And Michael Sheen brings a wonderful end-of-the-tether intensity to Daniel, making him a complex, driven creature who, you feel, deserves a better fate than simply to learn the banal lesson that nobody can give you the answers, you have to find them for yourself.

In rep. Booking: 0171-928 2252

Paul Taylor

TELEVISION TFI Friday, (Channel 4)

A programme that names the day in its title advertises the mood it is aiming for. See *First Tuesday* or *Saturday Night Live*. TFI Friday's saucy initials - F stands for Four, honestly - capture the spirit of devil-may-care that comes over us all on Rotten Day (Push Off Early - Tomorrow's Saturday, in case you're wondering). What makes it quintessentially a Friday product, even though it's not a programme about horticulture, is the fact that it is unavailable for advance viewing, and therefore for review.

More programmes go out live on a Friday, or are recorded very close to transmission, than any other evening of the week. This is something for the weekend night, when the dissemination of laughter is television's principal business. But in an ever more competitive market, comedians are like the building societies that all edgily set identical interest rates - nobody likes to appear at a disadvantage, so they all

have to be up to the minute.

The notable exception is *Gag Tag*, an entertainment cheerfully, almost heroically, impervious to topicality. Plainly, it must have been recorded in the past five years, because there was a joke last night about John Major, but the only other PM joke referred to Harold Wilson, who left office 20 years ago. This being the last in the current series, presumably we'll have to wait for the Disraeli gags.

You can tell it's from the old school because traditional comedy's self-defence mechanism has always been to deplore the weakness of its own jokes before anyone else can. Quizmaster Bob Monkhouse did a running joke about the awfulness of his guests that went closer to the bone than it intended. "Let's take a butcher's at our comedians," he said at the start, and you could see the punchline lumbering like a brontosaurus over the horizon. "No, better

idea: let's take our comedians to the butcher's."

*Gag Tag's* marriage of young comedians and old is a bid to argue that the alternative revolution was just a violent blip. The second-division performers certainly deliver a watertight case - the young pretenders are just as afflicted by gag sag as the old guard.

There were two moments of genuine wit - once when Eddie Large suggested a line you would never hear in a hospital: "There's a waiting list, your Highness." Large is starting to look alarmingly like John Prescott, and just this once he sounded like him, too. And Phil Jupitus, trying to paraphrase *The Silence of the Lambs*, came up with "Blimey, the livestock isn't making a lot of noise." The livestock in the audience loved that one, but not as much as Monkhouse's joke about people who chew condoms. There's no accounting for taste.

Jasper Rees



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# Boys and girls came out to play

Once upon a time there were no teenagers. Then JD Salinger, James Dean and Elvis Presley appeared in the fall-out from the birth of the Atomic Age. As a cross-media festival of 'The Fifties' runs over coming weeks in several cities, Michael Bracewell explores the origins of youth culture

"Sleep tight ya morons!" So Holden Caulfield, the teen hero of JD Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, bids farewell to his schooling at Pencey Prep and invents the teenager as a type within literary fiction. When we link Salinger with Elvis Presley and Jimmy Dean as the founding trinity of teenage rebellion in America, we tend to forget that *The Catcher in the Rye* was published in serial form between 1945 and 1946 – 10 years before *Rebel Without a Cause* rocketed Dean to stardom and Elvis had his first hit with "Heartbreak Hotel". In this much, Caulfield was a voice ahead of his time, making his first appearance at the same time Bogart was immortalising Chandler's Philip Marlowe in *The Big Sleep*.

There were no such beings as teenagers – in a cultural sense – when Salinger created his adolescent hero of angst and ennui: there were boys and girls who had no more connection with the adult world than high schools had with a speakeasy. And that adult world was still being presented, for the most part, as a mixture of the lurid and the sophisticated, with adultery, double-dealing and dinner jackets vying for prominence as the emblems of glamour. Twenty years earlier, in *Tales of the Jazz Age*, F. Scott Fitzgerald had created a teenage character called Basil Lee whose initial response to the strain of being unpopular at private school had been to fantasise a role for himself as an aristocratic secret agent in the international high society of New York. Basil's teenage revolution had been utterly divorced from adult reality – a premonition of *film noir* as pure fairy-tale. Holden, on the other hand, was wholly modern, crashing down the barriers between innocence and experience with no more than a shrug and a yawn – which made him all the more shocking. Holden was wise beyond his years, and it would take the best part of a decade for the youth of America to catch up with his groundbreaking example.

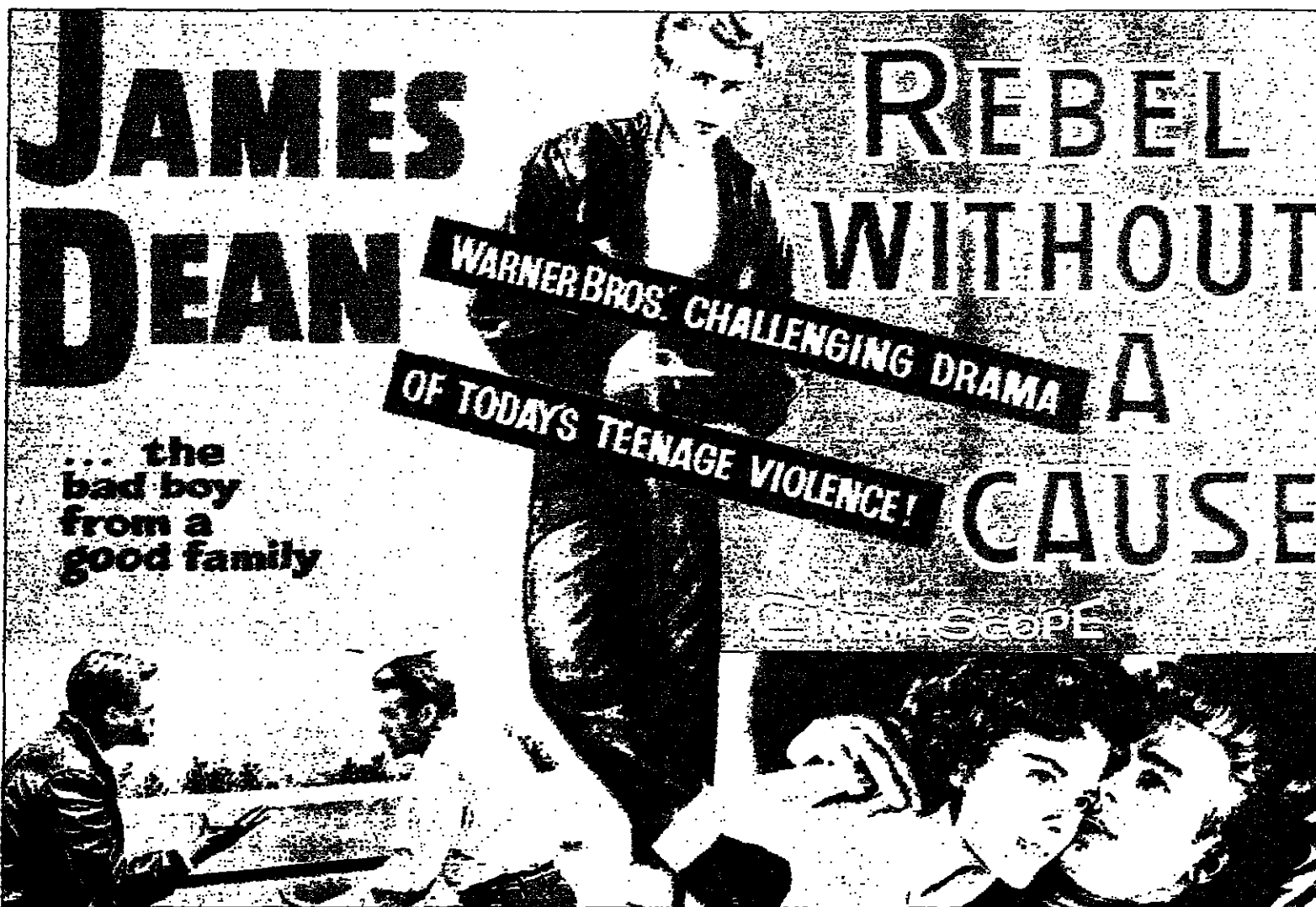
Placed in the broader picture, we can see how Salinger's hero was turning his back on adolescent conformity just as the United States Air Force was dropping the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Historically, he is the first teenage witness of the Atomic Age, finding his formative maturity in a period that was as critical as the one Henry James had experienced and described in 1913. Spiritually, the world was a harder place to believe in. By 1946, just as the new epoch of shark-finned Cadillacs, chrome trimmings and domestic technology was waiting to begin, so another era – as antiquated, by comparison, as Scott Fitzgerald's high society – was coming to an end. And it is out of the collision of these two distinct phases in history that the teenager, with protest on his mind, finally emerges.

We can see how Salinger caught the wave of change and embodied its force in Caulfield when we consider Salinger's education in relation to that of his fictional representative. Salinger attended the Valley Forge Military Academy in Pennsylvania – a manly, anti-intellectual, but expensive private school at which one was force-fed the rugged virtues of patriotism and the pioneer spirit. As with

Holden's private school of Pencey Prep, there was an authority to rebel against. Rushing forward 20 years, to 1968, when Lindsay Anderson's *If* described a parable of teenage rebellion within an English public school, we can see how potent the equation between private education and adolescent revolt had become. Unlike the fine line between "exploitation films" and social realism, which was blurred to sensational effect in British and American delinquency films in the late 1950s (*Violent Playground* being the best example), Anderson's portrait of a teenage anarchist shares Holden's background of sequestered, bourgeois schooling. The invention of the teenager, in cultural terms, can be seen as a transaction of language and attitude between the hitherto silenced "working class" and the newly expanded middle class.

Like Holden, Salinger was ambivalent about the old Episcopalian and military traditions of his alma mater, toying with ambiguous respect for his teachers but finally pronouncing them, and their morality, to be "phony". The world of Valley Forge had hit the rocks with the atomic bomb, and any youngster with his eyes half open had to see right through its archaic pretensions. In a neat twist of irony, Salinger's co-revolutionary in American fiction of the post-war period, William S. Burroughs, had attended a similarly rugged and exclusive school at Los Alamos, Santa Fe, which was requisitioned under the War Powers Act of 1943 to become the isolated research centre for the very atomic bomb that was dropped on Japan in 1945. The film-maker John Waters, whose brilliantly balanced comedies of teenage life in Baltimore in the 1950s do much to define the founding philosophy of teenagers, makes Atomic Age paranoia a central feature of the antagonism between the younger and the older generations. With teenagers, it could be said, the bomb was a social metaphor as much as a political reality, and vice versa.

By the time *The Catcher in the Rye* really took off as a publishing sensation of the early 1950s, Salinger was the reluctant celebrity author who had shaped the teenager as a tragicomic outlaw on the verge of an existential crisis. No literary novel before *The Catcher in the Rye* had spoken directly to its readers in the true voice and slang of youth. In cinema, too, as in 1938's *Angels with Dirty Faces* – whose protest was moralised as a naughtiness that could be tamed by patriarchal authority. And, while moralising would remain a feature of delinquency films and fiction in the 1950s (with Britain producing such hilarious examples of the genre as *Cock Boy*, where the moralising, typically, was the excuse for the cooing), Salinger's first teenager admits no morality other than his own, and relies on his own language to describe it. *The Catcher in the Rye*, from its laconic opening sentence ("...all that David Copperfield kind of crap..."), was both easy to read and wholly authentic in tone, thus linking it, in terms of literary style, to teenage best-sellers from Richard Allen's *Skateboard* books to the whacked-out argot of Brett Easton Ellis or even the phonetic Edinburgh tones of



*Trainspotting*. Swearing and conversational shorthand came as naturally to Salinger as nightingales did to Keats.

It is interesting to note that this ease of style, establishing the teenager's need for authenticity and sincerity, was the result of meticulous revision and Flaubertian attention to craft on the part of Salinger. This was no automatic writing, or proto-Beat transcription of everyday speech: each sentence in the novel is honed to suit the nuance of its scene and the intoxicating charm of the whole. And it hadn't been done before. To a potentially massive readership of potential teenagers, *The Catcher in the Rye* spoke to them in their own language, seducing them into its philosophy of mistrust, rebellion and self-reliance. This was a device that would be used to darker effect in 1962, when Burgess penned *A Clockwork Orange* in the cool slang of *nausai*.

There is a very short step from the ethos of *The Catcher in the Rye* to the glamour of Jimmy Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause*. The original promotional poster for *Rebel Without a Cause* comes with a Salingeresque strap-line: "Jim Stark – a kid in the year 1955 – what makes him tick like a bomb?" The film's account of the gauche teenage outsider, finding his way through the minefield of small-town high-school society, pursues the same sympathetic course between violent emotion and hypersensitivity as *The Catcher in the Rye*. Jim

Stark, though less assured than Holden Caulfield, is a teenager by virtue of his search for sincerity and a voice he can call his own. Indeed, Stark's rejection of his father rehearses Kurt Cobain's lyric that "I always wanted a father but still I got a Dad." As a teenage trait, the questioning of the family against a background of volatility and nervous boredom creates characters who, when faced with the traditional rites of passage, would sooner not bother. As a teenage tenet, this will run and run, finding its way through SE Hinton's *Rumblefish*, to the "Generation X" fiction of Douglas Coupland.

Central, therefore, to the literature of teenage disaffection, is the iron curtain of apocalyptic dread (a sense that the world has already ended) and an opposition to the nuclear family. What is required, emotionally and spiritually, is an older brother or a girl to believe in. True to the social and cultural suppression of women, however (even in the teenage revolution, girls were allotted strict roles as either swooning fans or blooming girlfriends), girls come second best to the sibling peer as brother and poet who can offer an escape from the world of "old people" which has grown precarious. Thus, what DB is to Holden Caulfield, as a near visionary poet brother, so *The Motorcycle Boy* is to Rusty James in *Rumblefish*. The elder brothers are martyrs for the teenage revolution, just as girlfriends can become

new Eves if the teenage rebellion can achieve its rock 'n' roll Eden.

With rock 'n' roll as the teenage soundtrack, Elvis Presley could articulate youth instinctively, with none of the artistic labour required by Salinger or Dean. Just as Salinger was middle class and Dean rural middle class, so Elvis was as poor as a white could be in the southern states of America. He learnt to sing from black choirs and white radio, but his genius lay in reversing the cleanliness of white popular music to announce the exuberance and frustration of teenagers. There was nothing intellectual about Elvis (although, like Salinger and Dean, he later discovered comparative religion and eastern philosophy), and his embodiment of rock 'n' roll, as a fusion of black and white music, stormed the barricades of race and class in a way that *The Catcher in the Rye* – as a middle-class phenomenon – could never achieve. But Salinger, it could be argued, had given intellectual authority to what Dean and Presley would translate into the mainstream media of popular culture. A self-fuelling loop was created during the 1950s by the teenage trinity of Salinger, Presley and Dean that expressed the mood of the new Atomic Age youth. This loop would simply keep on running, endlessly referring back to itself, for successive generations.

In *The Catcher in the Rye*, through the voice and dismissive philosophy of

'A kid in the year 1955': James Dean as gauche teenage outsider in *Rebel Without a Cause* – violent emotion, hypersensitivity and an apocalyptic dread of the nuclear family  
Photograph: Ronald Grant Archive

Holden Caulfield, we can hear echoes of Arthur Rimbaud's 19th-century teen revolt ("I am from beyond the grave. Really" – wrote Rimbaud in his *Illuminations* – "And out of work"), to say nothing of Fournier's *Le Grand Meaulnes* or Gide's *Bernardin de Seneville*. Teenagers had been around for a long time, but before *The Catcher in the Rye* they had lacked a defining personage that would captivate their audience and carry their message on a groundswell of unofficial revolution. Once found, the teenage voice would be faced with irreverence and humour, attempting to make an impossible marriage between nihilism and optimism. As Holden remarks in *The Catcher in the Rye*: "Anyway, I'm sort of glad they've got the atomic bomb invented. If there's ever another war, I'm going to sit right the hell on top of it. I'll volunteer for it, I swear to God I will."

'The Fifties' season runs to 21 April at venues in Birmingham, Cardiff and at the South Bank in London. Michael Bracewell will talk about 'The Invention of the Teenager' at the Royal Festival Hall, London SE1 (0171-928 8800) today, 7.30pm

THE WEEK IN REVIEW  
David Benedict

STRANGE DAYS

THE DANCE  
CRIME FICTIONS

THE PLAY  
PRESENT LAUGHTER

THE EXHIBITION  
SPELLBOUND

<p><b>KEY</b></p> <p>EXCELLENT</p> <p>GOOD</p> <p>FAIR</p> <p>POOR</p> <p>VERY POOR</p>	<p><b>OVERVIEW</b></p> <p><b>critical view</b></p> <p><b>on view</b></p> <p><b>on view</b></p>	<p><b>THE DANCE</b></p> <p><b>CRIME FICTIONS</b></p> <p><b>THE PLAY</b></p> <p><b>PRESENT LAUGHTER</b></p>	<p><b>THE EXHIBITION</b></p> <p><b>SPELLBOUND</b></p>
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# A humanist's holiday in Hell

John Mortimer offers a reader's guide to Dante's *Inferno*

**D**ante's *Inferno* is a 14th-century poem that seems calculated to cause the greatest possible pain to a 20th-century humanist, or to anyone who is attracted to Christianity because of its compassion and belief in the possibility of redemption. The God of the *Inferno* has precious little compassion and no forgiveness. He was the God who not only turned a blind eye to Belsen, but also exercised great ingenuity in constructing His own blood-chilling concentration camp, where sinners should suffer, not only during their brief lives, but for all eternity.

What is particular about Dante's God is that He consigns sinners to their particular circle in Hell according to an immutable tariff of offences. No attention is paid to mitigating circumstances, or the idea of doing justice to the individual soul before the Divine Court. Hell, in short, was made on exactly the lines that the present Home Secretary would wish to impose on our present sentencing system.

How do we reconcile the enjoyment of a great poem with what must seem, to many of us today, a repellent theology? Our own views may be best captured by Ulysses in his speech to his sailors. He celebrates the dignity of man and says: "You were not born to live as a mere brute does. But for the pursuit of knowledge and the good". But such sensible humanism is, apparently, no better than the excuses of the gluttons and the adulterers. Ulysses is condemned as a thief and must suffer in Hell.

In an admirable Preface to Robert Pinsky's translation, John Freccero deals with past attempts to enjoy the poem without revulsion. Coleridge advised us to "suspend disbelief" and enjoy the poetry without accepting the theology. Erich Auerbach sug-

The *Inferno* of Dante

translated by Robert Pinsky

illustrated by Michael Mazur

Dent, £20

gested we separate "Dante's didactic intent from his power of representation", and held that the reality of the condemned characters overwhelmed their allegorical meaning. Perhaps we should simply remember how Dante suffered from the ruthless power-seeking and political intrigue in Florence and take Hell as an accurate picture of politics today.

The Christian God of the early Renaissance is cruel and vindictive, but his victims and the pilgrim visitors are capable of finer emotions. In the fifth Canto, one of the poem's most beautiful passages, Francesca da Rimini, lover of her brother-in-law, Paolo, is found in the Circle of Incontinence, forever blown like a starling across a stormy sky, denied sleep or rest for ever, thrashed by the wind and calling harsh cries of agony. Francesca tells the poet that she and her lover read about Lancelot and Guinevere, the great illicit lovers, and their eyes met and "they read no more that day".

Dante describes the moment when he hears Francesca's story. He is so overcome with pity for her that he falls down like a dead man. Later he finds his kind old tutor Brunetto Latini tormented among the Sodomites, condemned to burn for a hundred years if he takes a second rest. "Might I have had my will," Dante says, "You would not have been thrust apart from human life." Perhaps one moral to be drawn from the *Inferno* is that, when it comes to a comparison between men and gods,

mankind usually comes out best.

This extraordinary poem, in which Dante's contemporaries, friends and enemies, together with such legendary and historical figures as Dido, Theseus, Olyseus and Brutus, suffer the ingenious torments of the damned, has been much translated. The main problem has been what to do with Dante's *terza rima*, an infernally ingenious but musically effective rhyme-scheme which calls for three rhymes repeated in the order ABA BCB CDC DED and so on. Some translators, such as John Sinclair, have avoided the daunting issue and turned the poetry of the *Inferno* into prose. Shelley translated a passage from the *Purgatorio* into pretty good *terza rima*. Dorothy L. Sayers, made of sterner stuff, used it in the whole of her verse translation with much success.

Robert Pinsky, a distinguished American poet, in his introduction blames the English language for being poor in rhyme, a proposition with which Byron, WS Gilbert and Cole Porter might not agree. He therefore makes considerable use of poor or "consonantal" rhymes of the sort used so effectively by Yeats and Auden. In my view they don't serve the magnificent sweep and clangour of the *Inferno* so well; but there are passages of beauty.

The advantages of this book are its illustrations (although I'd rather have Doré's) and the fact that the Italian original is printed on each opposite page. Even with my sketchy knowledge of the language, I can use Pinsky as a crib and enjoy the wonders of *terza rima*. I'd recommend getting hold of Sayers' version, too; it has a valuable glossary of names. Both translations are compulsively readable, just as the great poem is still calculated to make a humanist's hair stand on end.



'I was a man of arms, and after that became a corded friar': Michael Mazur's illustration for Canto XXVII

## Upper-class yells from a quiet man

Bernard O'Donoghue discovers virile songs and blooming irises in four new collections

**R**obert Crawford's view of Masculinity (Cape, £7.00) is sceptical, often expressed in evocatively repulsive images, like the smell of "unshowered Number Eights". But the trenchancy of his earlier poetry is only prominent in two of this book's four sections. The others are concerned with his relations with wife, child and parents: they show a tender and pious gravity which we hadn't seen before from this declarative and separatist-inclined Scot. The new Crawford is described in the first poem as, like his father, *homo vires*. "A Quiet Man".

Not that Crawford's rhetorical virility entirely deserts him as he exposes the defects of masculine ideology. The second poem, "Chaps", has an acting note (Crawford is an outstanding performer of his poems): the refrain must be "first of all yelled in an upper-class English voice - 'CHEPS!' before, 'falling to a whisper at the end'".

Some of the best effects come by way of resistance to the quietness of the family poems, as when the *vita nuova* of the previously ambitious young artist is expressed by the admirable neologism "Bovrilised". The relief at the escape back into verbal sparks is unmistakable in "Scotch Broth".

"A soup so thick you could shake its hand And stroll with it before dinner". The domestic poems are often beautiful and accomplished, especially those that offset the threat of domestic mawkishness with the consonantal roughness of Scots. But stand by for the old Crawford again, with sleeves rolled for more than the washing-up.

Ruth Padel is another vigorous and forceful exponent of language, whose new book *Eusewre* (Chatto, £6.99) runs two themes together: sex (not new in her poems) and English colonising of Ireland. What is most striking

about her anti-colonial rhetoric in the latter is that their fierce, dry irony could not be employed by an Irish writer without appearing inflammatory. Padel works her two subjects together brilliantly, in titles like "Your Place or Mine?".

The second of the book's two epigraphs introduces the perfect figure for the amalgam: "Desire paths", which are "private routes through public spaces" that urban planners have not allowed for. The harshness of sex in the war-zone, in poems such as "Desire Paths of Sarajevo", is reminiscent of *Gravetyne's Rainbow* in its bleakness. What is so impressive and so desolating is the Dantesque sense of misery in the spirit's fated, instinctive push towards happiness which is bound to fail in these contexts - and also maybe in any other.

Padel is an outsider in Ireland, and "foreign" is a recurrent term. Michael O'Loughlin, who has been credited with trying to write into

Irish history the Dublin urban experience it has ignored, is now on the well-beaten track of Irish poets abroad. In *Another Nation: New and Selected Poems* (Arc/New Ireland Books, £6.95), his language is lively, exuberant and profligate, as he attempts to cross-fertilise Irish culture with a multilingual cosmopolitanism, reading like a more innocent, if no less ambitious, Stephen Dedalus. Despite the attractive energy, the speed and range of his references (to Trakl, Vermeer, Tsvetaeva, Brahms, Veldego) can lead to a blurring of purpose. Thus we understand his desire for the non-urban simplicity of "Michael Hartnett's Irish".

"I heard the sound Of the snow falling through moonlight"

Onto the empty fields, - while recognising uneasily that such romanticism represents a back-sliding from O'Loughlin's grander programme.



Ruth Padel: anti-colonial rhetoric

Louise Glück is never romantic, despite her extraordinarily Romanticism-derived subject. *The Wild Iris* (Carnegie, £8.95) is the ultimate *passage moralise*, an account of the passing year, with the days divided into the canonical hours of dawn and dusk, through addresses from flowers to gardeners. Often this turns magnificently into an address from creation to God, since the year is a plant's lifespan. The book achieves

in every line that most difficult of poetic tasks, to make the personal widely significant. With the medieval European lyric-poets, Glück returns obsessively to the tragedy of the human in contrast to flowers: we don't bloom again. Like all large subjects, this sounds trite; the poems could not be less so, as would be evident from any quotation. The second of the seven "Matins" poems ends: "We merely know it wasn't human nature to love only what returns love".

A feature of 20th-century reaction to poetry on this side of the Atlantic is that we have been so late coming to an appreciation of the great American poets, especially women such as Bishop and Adrienne Rich. We are indebted to publishers like Anvil and Carcanet who have kept writers like Glück in our sights. She is a poet of enormous importance and intelligence; we must not miss her.

## Entrancements on the local bus

Jeff Nuttall encounters priestly kisses and exiled flautists

**J**ohn Ashbery doesn't half go on. His *Can You Hear, Bird* (Carcanet, £4.95) is the latest in a steady tide of work in which his strange, laconic ecstasy is constant and unchanging. Reading him is like sitting on a bus next to a compulsive talker who promises to be the biggest bore in the world until you realise that he is entranced and so are you. He would continue nattering whether you were there or not. It is your exceptional good fortune that you are admitted to this wry, private litany.

The casual tone of these poems, which sometimes start in mid-sentence, confounds the formal norms a reader may expect. The titles don't seem to have a lot to do with the text much of the time, and the text is whispered in the ear, a droll commentary on the procession of cunningly disconnected day-to-day miracles flitting past Ashbery's senses. "So runs, says he, 'the carousel we call life'".

The disconnected interaction of his successive experiences is the secret dynamic of his work. "Music played by a gifted child puts me in mind of a cigar I smoked on a picket line once," he says. Another time he was "digging a fire trench. Along came a fireball/ stopped, asked the time of day/ and went politely on his way." The speaker is continuously surprised and so are we.

Much of Ashbery's verse avoids obvious metre. The rhythms are oblique even when, in the long poem, "This Tuesday", he flirts with rhyming quatrains. Ashbery is a poet of vastly greater stature than any of them, but Ogden Nash, Bill Moenkhaus, the crazy Dadaist of Hoagy Carmichael's college days, and Groucho Marx are all among his antecedents.

Similarly Ashbery is among the antecedents of Tess Gallagher's *Portable Kisses* (Bloodaxe, £7.95). Even in the midst of a most gra-

ciously negotiated grief for her dead husband, Raymond Carver, she maintains a light and wonder-struck touch for a world that is never blamed for her personal misfortune. Carver's vacated spaces are thronged with kisses which are not acts, nor gestures, but which, in a spirit akin to that of Ashbery, are personae, nuisance children, priest confessors. Like Ashbery's, her tone is quiet, anti-rhetorical and friendly.

Roy Fisher has Ashbery's scale and, in his more radical pieces like "The Ship's Orchestra", an oddball novella, something of Ashbery's delight in the disconnected. "The Ship's Orchestra" is included in *The Dow Low Drop* (Bloodaxe, £8.95) which includes all his work already published in an earlier *Selected Poems* with some new work added, including a selection of passages from the title poem.

Fisher, like Bunting and Ken Smith, is one of the few British

poets this century who have joined topographical material with humour and intimations of destiny. He ranges the Midlands landscape like a guide, with a kind of morose avidity for fact and detail, always bewildered about how scenes of such turbulence and invention have grown so oddly quiet.

The anecdotes are always vivid and often about humanity's inability to deal with its own realities. There is a tonic frontal sanity about Fisher's work and his self-deprecatory humour can make the reader (this one anyway) yelp with laughter. For instance: "Men call me Roy; Fisher. Women call me: remote".

Fisher is quoted in the back cover of Ian Pople's *The Glass Enclosure* (Arc, £5.95), praising Pople's work, and you can see why. Pople writes about places illuminated by the disjointed cultures they accommodate. Thus we have



Kate Clanchy: compassion for men

saves Pople from being another despondent poetic voice is his skill with the extraordinary.

Charles Boyle's *Paleface* (Faber, £6.99), although immaculately written, is in danger of being one more fed-up slim volume about British urban life which everybody knows is dire. So is Kate Clanchy, although in her first collection, *Slattern* (Chatto, £6.99), she expresses a perceptive, unselfish compassion for the male of the species.

An Irish flautist busking in an alien city for his fare back to Larnie is just one of a number of men and boys in these pages. With vowels composed into sequences of considerable beauty, she explores the difficult excitement of the violence, failure and disaster of human energy without condemnation and with a great deal of vivid compassion, notably in a telling poem about the James Bulger case.

## Gender bending

So men sometimes write as women, and women write as men. 'So what?' asks Judith Palmer

The Routledge Anthology of

Cross-Gendered Verse

edited by Alan Michael Parker

and Mark Willhardt

Routledge, £11.99 paperback

**O**nce upon a time there was a poem, and it lived happily in its own slim volume. One day the poem caught the eye of an anthologist. "You're just what I've been looking for," said the anthologist. "Come home with me and I'll make you famous. You can live in my anthology with lots of other poems. I know you'll get on together, you have so much in common."

He had been a rich multi-layered poem of shifting meanings and vibrant ambiguities. "You won't need those here," said the anthologist, as he stripped him of his shimmering cloak of inflections. "Put this uniform on, it's much more practical, one size fits all. Isn't that better? Now everyone knows exactly what sort of poem you are." But did they? "I'm an exploration of the soul's conflicting impulses towards salvation," called the poem enticingly to a reader browsing nearby. "Don't be silly," replied the reader, "everyone knows you're just a minor example of a cross-gendered poem."

All anthologies are factitious but some are more factitious than others. They can provide illumination, different contexts in which to reinterpret a poem, a new lens through which to read. Too often, however, the lens distorts. Poems are wrenched from their original context and yoked by violence together, to form a sort of literary chain-gang. Alan Michael Parker and Mark Willhardt, editors of this anthology, are heinous offenders, mercilessly shackling poems to their own spurious thesis.

An anthology of cross-gendered verse does not, as you might suppose, consist of poems by, for or about transvestites, transsexuals or hermaphrodites. No glimpses of Dylne tresses backstage at Madame Jo-Jo's. No Jayne County, Barry Humphries or Ruby Venezuela.

No sign either of genderly-challenged poetic characters such as Shakespeare's Rosalind (requiring a boy actor to play a girl pretending to be a boy), Salmacis and Hermaphroditus (inspiration to many, including Ovid, Swinburne and Hughes), or Eliot's "old man with wrinkled dugs", the southsayer Tiresias.

Parker and Willhardt have made the breathtaking discovery that poets sometimes adopt personas. Women write in the voice of men, men in the voice of women. It's taken for granted that novelists invent characters, yet is considered unusual for poets to write anything that isn't confessional or autobiographical.

So we find Chaucer's Wife of Bath riding side-saddle with Fenynson's Rizzpah and Blake's Nurse. Anne Sexton writes as Jesus, Lucille Clifton as Powell, the officer charged with the beating of Rodney King. A hundred poems from Middle English and early Scots through to present-day New York, offer a succession of dramatic monologues delivered in voices of the opposite sex.

Some of my favourite poems are here: Pound's "The River Merchant's Wife", for example: "While my hair was still cut straight across my forehead/ Played I about the front gate, pulling flowers"; or Rita Dove's "Genie's Prayer" under the Kitchen Sink: "The hot water squeezed/ to a trickle so she counted out the finger holes/ and dialled her least-loved son."

What remains consistent throughout all this diversity, the editors insist, "is the sense that each of these works should be seen within the context of gender and as an exploration of gender." Yet the book provides no biographical material. Are the poets gay or straight? At what stage in their lives was the poem written? Did the poet specialise in dramatic monologues or was the form chosen on one occasion only? In the absence of context, the anthology remains arbitrary.

It may look like a valid excuse for a poetry anthology, but look beneath the pancake make-up and false tits, and you'll find it's a travesty.



Bangkok summit: EU states duck rights issues to avoid a damaging rift with world's strongest economies

# Major calls for UN to put its house in order

DONALD MACINTYRE  
Bangkok

John Major made a plea for rapid reform in the United Nations yesterday at the EU-Asia economic summit, as most European leaders agreed to avoid confrontation with China and South-East-Asian economic powers over human rights.

Mr Major pressed the case for streamlining the UN and putting it on a firm financial footing following estimates that it could "run out of money in November". The Prime Minister said it would be "ludicrous" for the UN to go bust and warned it "must not be allowed to grind to a halt".

He urged Asian countries to back EU proposals for tough penalties on non-payers, to accelerate the payment of arrears and reform contributions to take account of the relative wealth of members.

Mr Major, who won strong support from Thailand for his call for UN reforms, will today call for the liberalisation of Asian markets.

The threat of a walk-out by Indonesia, led by President Suharto, if Portugal used the summit to resume attacks on

human rights abuses in East Timor was averted when the Portuguese Prime Minister, Antonio Guterres, talked informally to the Mr Suharto in the margins of the summit. The Portuguese leader suggested a resumption of diplomatic contacts between the two countries, which elicited a non-committal response from Mr Suharto.

The Europeans' desire to avoid conflict over human rights reflects the importance attached by the EU to expanding trade relations with the fastest growing economies in the world. Mr Major has repeatedly pointed out that the countries at the summit account for more than half the world's Gross Domestic Product.

Jacques Santer, the EU Commission President, made a plea for Asian countries to accept that the Single European Market "has greatly improved the opportunities for third countries to do business in the European Union".

In a thinly disguised appeal to Asian countries to lower barriers against EU exports, he pointed out that 40 per cent of imports of manufactured goods would be duty-free, while tariffs on other products would be cut by a third in the next decade.

Leon Brittan, the EU Trade Commissioner, has been active pressing Asian countries to open up their vast telecommunications markets, to secure a worldwide liberalisation agreement by the April deadline set by the World Trade Organisation. An aide to Sir Leon admitted they failed to draw a clear response and added: "We are into the last five weeks so it is a very urgent process."

In meetings with the Chinese government, Sir Leon pressed for the level of liberalisation that would enable China to qualify for WTO membership. Sir Leon told the Prime Minister, Li Peng, that China needed to end the monopoly of state organisations running import and export businesses, reduce tariffs and liberalise the car industry. He said if Peking took such steps the EU would back its membership of WTO.

Sir Leon urged Peking to stop restricting the free flow of economic information through overseas news agencies, saying it violated the WTO principles.

He also pressed Li Peng to accept Hong Kong's continued importance as an entrepreneurial centre, and was assured its "capitalism" would survive the handover to China.

## Chinese try to calm fears over ill dissident

TERESA POOLE  
Peking

Wei Jingsheng, China's most prominent pro-democracy dissident, is in good health apart from hypertension and "a fatty liver", the Chinese government announced yesterday. The unusual medical bulletin on the country's best-known political prisoner followed reports from relatives that Mr Wei, who is 46, was suffering from heart disease, and comes just weeks before China is likely to face attempted elections at the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva.

Last November, the closed court trial of Mr Wei had to be halted for nearly half an hour when he suffered an attack of high blood pressure. The judges later sentenced him to 14 years for attempting to overthrow the government, and since January he has been kept in solitary confinement at the Nanpu

salworks about three hours' drive from Peking, occupying the same cell in which he spent the latter part of his earlier 14-year jail term. Since March 1979, Mr Wei has spent only six months out of prison.

Support is growing around the world for this year's Nobel Peace Prize. Yesterday, 110 British MPs from all parties signed a Commons motion calling for his immediate release from prison and backing the Nobel nomination. He was also nominated in 1995.

The Xinhua news agency announcement appeared timed for the run-up to the Geneva vote. Since 1990, China has faced an annual motion, sponsored by the United States, condemning its human-rights record, although these have so far been defeated because China has lobbied support from developing countries. Mr Wei's sen-

tence, the dispute over the choice of a new Panchen Lama in Tibet, and revelations this year on China's orphanages have put the human-rights spotlight firmly on Peking.

Xinhua said that Mr Wei had been given a thorough physical examination, including an electrocardiogram and 24-hour monitoring which had ruled out heart disease. "The prison hospital has treated Wei Jingsheng's diseases and he is now in a healthy condition," Xinhua said.

Meanwhile, new legislation was yesterday passed into law, specifying that martial law may be declared in the case of serious threats to national unity.

Analysts said the Chinese government wanted the law on the statute books before the death of 91-year-old Deng Xiaoping in case of public unrest after the paramount leader passes away.

international

## Howard set for close win in Australia

ROBERT MILLIKEN  
Sydney

Buoyed by opinion polls which suggest he will be Prime Minister after today's general election, John Howard, leader of the Liberal Party, embarked on a barrage of radio and television interviews yesterday to convince swinging voters in critical seats to end the 13-year era of Labor government.

As his strategists delivered the results of private party polls, which predicted that the conservative Liberals and their junior coalition partners, the National Party, would pick up more than the seven seats they need to topple Labor, Mr Howard displayed the solemn air of a leader who sensed that the elusive prize which he has pursued for 22 years in politics was finally within his grasp.

For his part, Paul Keating, fighting to win an unprecedented sixth term for Labor, ended his campaign the way he began it, as the underdog. Not for him the radio and television studios of Sydney, from where Mr Howard disseminated his message that Labor had left Australia with record foreign debt and youth unemployment.

The Prime Minister was in Tasmania yesterday, after spending the last three days flying thousands of miles from Cairns, in north Queensland, to Adelaide, Canberra and Melbourne, shoring up votes in Labor's most vulnerable seats and calling for a fresh mandate to continue economic and social reforms. He asked Australians to compare his vision of a new, Australian republic, economically engaged in the Asia-Pacific region, with the "philosophically stranded" coalition. "Did we build a new standard, have we created a change?" he asked. "Or do we just nod gently off back to sleep again like we did in the Rip Van Winkle years?"

Mr Keating refused to concede the game was up. And, as commentators discovered three years ago, after writing him off under similar circumstances at the last election, he could be right. Australians have rejected incumbent governments only four times since the Second

World War, in 1949, 1972, 1975 and 1983.

Voters may be fed up with the Labor government, convinced it has run out of ideas and turned off by what they perceive as Mr Keating's arrogance. But the government is not swamped by scandal or sinning of decay.

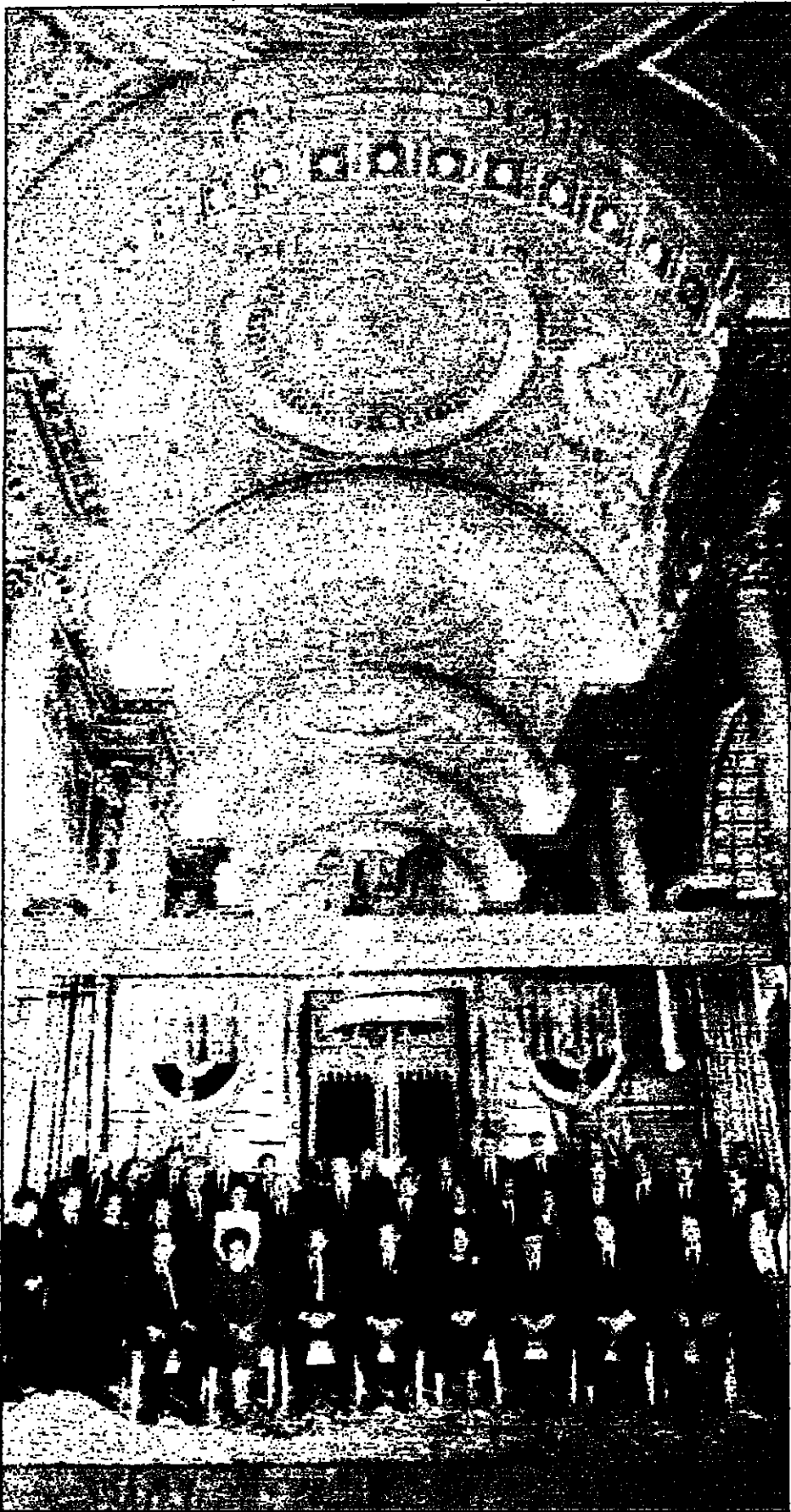
Mr Howard is making his second bid to become prime minister, after failing to dislodge Labor under Bob Hawke in 1987. If Mr Howard has a vision for Australia in the next millennium, he has failed to convey it during the campaign. That explains the grudging endorsement of the coalition in the latest opinion polls yesterday.

Having started the campaign five weeks ago trailing the coalition by 11 points, Labor closed the gap in the three main polls to finish two, three and six points behind respectively. A nationwide poll published in a Brisbane newspaper yesterday gave Labor a one-point lead, the first poll to put Labor ahead. Mr Keating maintained a lead over Mr Howard as preferred prime minister in most polls.

On election eve, it was difficult to measure the impact of the "forged letters affair", a sensational development on Wednesday in which a senior Labor minister released letters apparently damaging to the coalition, but which later turned out to be fakes. The Labor Party yesterday issued a statement to federal police investigating the affair claiming the letters originated in Liberal Party ranks. Liberals accused Labor staff of forging them.

Three of Australia's leading newspapers, the Sydney Morning Herald, the Age of Melbourne, and the Australian Financial Review, called for a coalition victory yesterday. But two influential newspapers owned by Rupert Murdoch went against the grain. The Australian, his national flagship, declined to endorse either side, while the Daily Telegraph, a mass-circulation Sydney tabloid, backed Mr Keating.

While most papers splashed headlines that predicted Mr Keating's defeat, the Murdoch papers provided upbeat coverage of the final hours of Mr Keating's campaign.



Glittering assembly: Heads of government gathered for an official photograph in a throne-room of the King of Thailand's palace. Photograph: Kamimasa Mayama/Reuters

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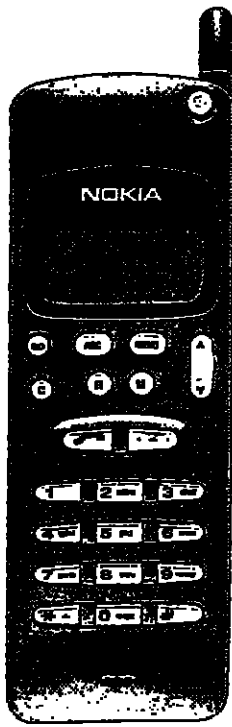
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## books

All you need to know about  
the books you meant to read

by Gavin  
Griffiths



### THE SUN ALSO RISES (1926) by Ernest Hemingway

**Also known as:** *Fiesta*, the title under which the novel was published in England

**Plot:** Jake Barnes, an American journalist, has been emasculated by a mysterious injury sustained in the First World War. In tones of savage stoicism, he narrates details of his life in the Twenties amid an idle group of sybaritic expatriates who swan about the cafés and bars of Paris. They chatter, drink too much and brawl. Jake's frustration centres on his love for Lady Brett Ashley. She returns his affection but seeks sexual gratification elsewhere. For fun and money, she decides to marry the bullish Mike upsetting yet another suitor, Robert Cohn, who is both aggressive and wheedling by turns. This discordant quartet becomes increasingly raucous until they drift to Spain for a holiday.

Jake evades the wasteland of his personal existence by mixing with peasants and fishing for trout. He is also an aficionado of bull fighting, the unsporting ritual which comes to represent Man under pressure, pushed to the limits of concentration and courage.

Meanwhile, Brett is after Pedro the matador. But before she can nail him to the bedpost, Pedro makes a tactical (if tactless) exit. Cohn turns violent. Jake runs away to the seashore.

Brett contacts Jake and they meet in Madrid. She believes that only Jake's little physical problem prevents their love from flowering. The novel closes with Jake's dry response: "Isn't it pretty to think so?"

**Theme:** An attempt to find value and meaning in

a post-war cosmopolitan world of slippery self-indulgence. Like Jake (the castrated he-man), all the characters have been damaged by the war. Even Brett was a nurse and witnessed unmentionable suffering. The natural life of the Spanish peasantry provides an example of true experience but this route to salvation is closed to the lost generation.

**Style:** Hemingway's plain declarative sentences are short of adverbs and polysyllabic adjectives. The spare prose has a tensile muscularity that invests the physical world with brilliant immediacy.

**Chief strengths:** Although the characters are squalid and inconsequential, they are viewed with sympathy. The "pointless" dialogue illuminates their inability to communicate and the obsessive triviality: pathos of their desires. Even Brett maintains a frail dignity amid the waves of pleasure seeking.

**Chief weakness:** Jake's racist, sexist and political prejudices seem to be endorsed by the author; they are certainly not subject to any blasts of irony. The macho stuff with bullfighters is sprayed with excessive glamour.

**What they thought of it then:** Hemingway's stock has fallen because a) his view of life is unfashionable b) his biographers tend to forget the young hard-working Joycean aesthete, in lieu of the older drunken braggart.

**Responsible for:** Turning journalism into art and killing off the Victorian sentence. Writing is for toughies rather than wimps; the stylistic influence extends from Mickey Spillane to Anthony Powell.

# A bearded prophet of the wilderness

Michael Coveney's biography of the director Mike Leigh sent John Campbell scuttling back to the video shop

The World According

to Mike Leigh

by Michael Coveney,  
HarperCollins, £18

Uniqueness is the mark of an enduring artist. Mike Leigh passes the test. There is no one like him. No other playwright or film director – certainly in Britain – does what he does. He developed his own method early on and has stuck to it tenaciously for 30 years, from his first staged experiments on the Sixties fringe through television breakthrough in the Seventies with *Nuts in May* and *Abigail's Party* to international recognition as an independent, prize-winning and even bankable film maker (*High Hopes*, *Life Is Sweet*, *Naked*) in the late Eighties. His integrity commands respect even if you question the results.

His method is often described as "improvisation". But this is misleading. It suggests something serendipitous and uncontrolled, whereas in fact all Leigh's finished work is very tightly structured. Nothing is improvised on stage or camera. The improvisation comes much earlier, when he and his actors together create the characters whose interaction will form the story of the play or film. Leigh does this individually with each actor, building a complete character through traits of personality, language, clothes and lifestyle before introducing them to one another. Thus events and dialogue are sparked by the collision of autonomous characters instead of being given to the actors in advance by an omniscient author. Other directors use improvisation to explore and deepen actors' understanding of their roles; no one else starts with it. But the point is that Leigh, starting with nothing, ends up with a precisely detailed script. His credits used to say "devised and directed by Mike Leigh"; they now read "written and directed".

Of course, he is not quite *sui generis*. His method was influenced by people like Peter Brook and Ken Campbell. Paradoxically his finished product comes closest to Pinter, whose resonant sounding of the hollow poetry of banality is honed in the study, not the



Mike Leigh with his director of photography, Roger Pratt (left), during the filming of *High Hopes*

Photograph: Ronald Grant Archive

rehearsal room. Michael Coveney draws other comparisons, with Ben Jonson's comedy of "humours" and with Ayckbourn. But like him or loathe him – and you can loathe him either for creating patronising caricatures or reproducing the sheer tedium of ordinariness – Leigh is a true original. It is a pity his name does not lend itself to an adjective like "Pinteresque".

His surname, Coveney reveals, was actually changed from Lieberman. His grandparents on both sides were part of that fruitful influx of Jewish emigrants from Russia that so alarmed the Tory Government of the day that it passed the 1902 Aliens Act to keep them out. Leigh rejected his Jewish inheritance as soon as he could; but Coveney has no doubt that it helped shape him. He grew up as

part of the large, prosperous and self-confident Jewish community in Manchester, bourgeois but still outsiders. His interest in human oddity was stimulated by the extensive tribe of his bizarre relations. He disappointed his parents – both doctors – by failing to get into Manchester Grammar School, Salford, however, more working-class and much less academic – suited him better. He played the lead in school productions of Gogol and Shaw, and remembers reading *Look Back in Anger* in the school library in 1956. He was 13, and had found his meter. Four years later he won a Rada scholarship.

The breadth of subsidised opportunity open to that privileged generation is brought home by Coveney's account of Leigh's first five years after leaving school.

Between 1960 and 1965 he "not only studied at Rada but worked as an assistant stage manager in repertory, acted in films and on television, took a foundation year course at Camberwell Arts School while attending evening classes at the London School of Film Technique... and spent a year in the theatre design department of the Central School of Art and Design". He created his first play while employed at the Midland Arts Centre in Birmingham; and, in 1967, he landed a job as an assistant director with the RSC.

His face – or rather his methods – did not fit and he was quickly sacked. The next few years were his most difficult, struggling for the chance to devise shows in colleges and fringe venues like the Open Space and Traverse. It was a piece

at the Open Space in 1970 – the excruciating, *Chekhovian* *Bleak Moments* – which marked his breakthrough. Albert Finney – another Salford boy – put up £17,000 to make it into a film. Then Tony Garnett, exercising an artistic freedom unimaginable today, gave him a slot to make *Hard Labour* for the BBC, and he was away.

Coveney's is not a great book: his idea of criticism is more to berate Leigh's detractors – Dennis Potter, David Edgar, Julie Burchill, Pauline Kael – than to offer much interpretation of his own. But his account of Leigh's now very substantial oeuvre – some 37 films and theatre pieces, climaxing in the grimly Dostoyevskian *Naked* (1993) – is clear and helpful. It certainly sent me back to the video shop.

## Marriage: a health warning

Michael Arditti on a young gay writer's acute portrait of a heterosexual couple

The focus of Dale Peck's debut novel, *Fucking Martin*, may have lain on the titular verb, but almost as crucial was the narrator's relationship with his parents, Henry and Beatrice. And yet, by dint of the novel's sub-junctive mode, with the family dramas and sexual encounters being reviewed from different perspectives, the characters had little chance to develop and Henry and Beatrice remained particularly sketchy. Their more detailed portraits are the subject of Peck's second book.

It is brave of a young writer best known for his gay writing to tackle a marriage. As with *Fucking Martin*, Peck's structure is experimental. In alternate – yet contemporaneous – chapters, he portrays the young Henry and Beatrice through their early marriage and the old Hank and Bea. 40

### The Law of Enclosures

by Dale Peck

Chatto and Windus, £15.99

years on, when their love is as diminished as their Christian names.

Peck movingly depicts the misfit match between Beatrice, recently released from domestic drudgery, and Henry under sentence of death from a brain tumour that is wrongly rumoured to be AIDS. After Henry's successful surgery, they marry, drop out of college, take routine jobs and find temporary solace in drink and adultery. The stages of their decline, while not detailed in the narrative, are made implicit in their subsequent despair and

in Bea's honest but horrific: "Oh, Hank. You should have just died." In later years, their children refuse to visit them, and their closest relationship is with another unhappy couple, Stan and Myra. After Stan dies, Hank decides that they should move north and build a house next to Myra's trailer. When the house is built, to specifications that are clearly symbolic rather than practical, Henry and Beatrice (for their names have reverted), experience a rebirth of love.

Peck displays remarkable empathy with his elderly protagonists. Myra laments that, "We're the last generation to have long meaningless marriages. Wives waiting for their husbands to die, husbands waiting for their wives to die," and the book is shot through with the spiritual souring of loveless relationships. The moment of

Henry and Beatrice's sexual renewal is handled with great grace. The trouble is that much of the writing is stuck in a state of stasis. Once the spring/autumn contrast becomes clear, as it does very quickly, the novel goes nowhere. The structure sets up a series of simple juxtapositions, while the almost exclusive concentration on Henry and Beatrice is not justified by their intrinsic interest. Peck rises skilfully to the emotional heights, but fails to make the mundane compelling.

The decision to portray both past and present events as contemporaneous is equally restricting. Henry and Beatrice are removed from history. Nothing shapes them beyond the domestic world of their marriage. Nothing wider can shape them because time and place in any meaningful sense do not exist. Peck himself seems

aware of the problem when he makes Hank's mother reply to Bea's "This is the Nineties" with "This is not the Nineties, Bea. This is Long Island"; but merely setting it in a backwater does not fill the void.

By far the finest writing comes when Peck abandons his narrative in favour of a memoir of his own parents. The precise purpose of this section in the overall scheme – whether it is to emphasise the fictional nature of the rest or to show how the rows between Peck's father and his four wives feed into the portrayal of Hank and Bea – is unclear. Nevertheless, in his description of his mother's early death and the stories he made up to cope with it, Peck writes with an intensity and commitment lacking elsewhere. Ultimately, it is the author's story, not his fiction, that captures the reader's heart.

### Audiobooks



This Sceptred Isle  
read by Anna Massie and Paul Eddington

Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire  
read Philip Madoc and Neville Jason

Now that heroes are back in force, history is high fashion. But Anna Massie, the anchorwoman on Radio 4's *This Sceptred Isle* (BBC, 3hrs, £9.99), sounds too like Joyce Grenfell in a primary school; she is not helped by a script of unutterable banality. The extracts from Winston Churchill's *History of the English-Speaking People* are, predictably, better phrased, although the late Paul Eddington's reading of them is, sadly, lacklustre.

But Philip Madoc's splendid voice, full of importance, makes Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (Naxos, 8hrs, £12.49) quite mesmerising: like driving through history in a Rolls-Royce. It is also a timely reminder of the brilliance of its legendary author. Gibbon can analyse character, tell a love story, and describe practicalities with the same matchless lucidity.

Christina Hardyment

## Sometimes the best nightmares are old-fashioned ones

Post-modernism is all very well, says Geoff Dyer, but you can't beat a thrilling tale well told

It has always struck me as perverse that anyone should write a thesis about an author they love. Putting someone through the academic meat-grinder like that is an exercise in mutual attrition. Researchers are obliged to grind their authors down and to wear themselves out in the process, and only when there is nothing left but dust, only then – by a final, exquisite irony – can they be called "Doctors". "Morticians" would be a better title, for they turn literature into a vast morgue.

Patricia Duncker's challenging, provocative first novel is about an apprentice-mortician coming alive to his subject and, in the process, bringing him back from the dead. The narrator is doing graduate work on a subversive French nov-

### Hallucinating Foucault

by Patricia Duncker

Serpent's Tail, £8.99

elist, Paul Michel. He's content beavering and footnoting away in the library until he begins an affair with another graduate student, a bony, myopic, DM-wearing Germanist whose thick glasses – this detail proves crucial to the novel's symbolic scheme – give her the look of an owl. Yes, not my cup of tea either, but she blows apart the narrator's ideas of dispassionate, scholarly scrutiny of the texts.

Michel, she reveals, is mad, and for the last 25 years has been

banged up in asylums in France. Goaded by his lover's intellectual passion, the narrator pledges himself to go to France, not just to find out what has happened to Michel in the intervening years but, also, if possible, to free him.

In doing so, he embraces the challenge set out by Foucault in the Preface to *The Archaeology of Knowledge*: "There are times in life when the question of knowing it one can think differently than one thinks and perceive differently than one sees is absolutely necessary if one is to go looking and reflecting at all." When he gets to the asylum where Michel is confined, the novel moves deep into Foucaultian territory, into themes of "madness, death, sexuality and crime" that attracted *le grand*

*philosophe*. These were Michel's themes, too, and the books of the two writers constitute – it is claimed – a trans-generic dialogue, a series of mutually explicating, explicit yet allusive love letters.

We don't come face to face with Michel until past the novel's halfway point. Up until then we follow an archival trail that yields glimpses of his writing. Technically, Duncker thereby sets herself the problem directors have when making films about great imaginary artists: producing samples of work that live up to the myth created by the fiction. Michel's prose was "ironic, disengaged, detached", and the bits and pieces we see are enough to persuade us, just, that their (alleged) author was capable of writing the books on which his

notoriety rests. Duncker succeeds in doing this partly through the contrast with the narrator's voice which, at times, suffers from the unengaging wobbles of a 23-year-old graduate student. Early on, he nearly has a "brain haemorrhage with jealousy"; in Paris the streets stink of "Gauloises and urine"; later, he smokes so much that his mouth tastes "like an ashtray".

At this stage one is willing to give Duncker the benefit of the doubt, for an even more difficult feat is still to come: that of making the real-life – ie fictive – Michel live up to expectations. The suspense feels somewhat narrator-contrived, narrator-led: to make sure we are excited about the forthcoming encounter, the nar-

rator is always telling us that he is "terrified", "seething", "shaking, his skin tingling." One is reminded of Leavis's point about Conrad over-doing the atmospherics on the way to the meeting with Kurtz. In Duncker's case, the anxiety and suspense felt by the reader is more far-reaching than the author intended: what we are also wondering is: will she pull it off?

She does. Michel crackles with electricity. The air hums around this compound and distillation of Artaud-Genet. The reader falls for his warped tenderness, his perverse saintliness. In his every move there is a latent propensity for violence, a memory and premonition of "madness or despair". That was what Marlow said of Kurtz, of course, but Michel has inhabited

a world more terrifying than that suggested by the horror of jungle metaphysics. "He looked up into the trees. Then he said, quietly, 'You cannot imagine the horror of dullness.'" *Hallucinating Foucault* is cunning, post-modern and so forth, but one ends up believing in Duncker as a novelist for the simple, old-fashioned reason that she has made us believe in her seething, wounded creation.

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## Too much cloak, not enough dagger

Andrew Lownie finds fault with an espionage anthology

The Oxford Book of Spy Stories, edited by Michael Cox, OUP £17.99

In one of the stories in *The Oxford Book of Spy Stories*, the interrogator describes espionage as a "game invented by the English during the Napoleonic Wars... they have learned to play it with gentle but consummate skill." Just as our Intelligence Services are among the best in the world, so too are our spy writers, which may explain the popularity of spy anthologies in this country. There have been some two dozen over the last 50 years with editors of the distinction of Eric Ambler and Graham Greene. Now Michael Cox, who has produced some excellent anthologies of detective and ghost stories, does his bit with these 28 stories published over the last 100 years.

He has a difficult task. Like one of Henry VIII's wives, one's responsibility is known, the problem is how to make it seem different. How does one breathe new life into an old form? He has compounded his difficulties by electing to include only short stories rather than brief extracts from spy novels.

A fiction anthology should not merely be a random collection of stories. It needs to have a point of view, and the basis on which the selection has been made needs to be made clear. This is not readily apparent from Cox's introduction, which gives a lucid account of the origins and growth of spy fiction but only addresses his selection in passing.

He claims his choice constitutes the best spy stories, but, as Mandy Rice-Davies remarked on another occasion, "He wouldn't be?" No, what he has done is provide a little of everything. There are much-anticipated stories such as Valentine Williams' "The Pigeon Man" and Ambrose Bierce's "Parker Adderson, Philosopher", there is an example of the cross-fertilisation of the genre with Robert Sheckley's futuristic "Citizen in Space", and there are stories from writers not usually associated with the genre, like Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, WE Johns and John Galsworthy.

The usual suspects are also here - William Le Queux, AEW Mason, Edgar Wallace, Eric Ambler, Len Deighton, Ted Albrecht - though not always with their best-known, or indeed their best, work. Personally, I would have chosen John Buchan's more overtly espionage tales "The Loathly Opposite" or "Dr

Lartius" rather than the unremarkable Jacobite story "The Lit Chamber".

That said, his eschewing of the well-known for the less familiar often works. One of Somerset Maugham's Ashenden stories had to be included, not least to mark the transition from the romantic to the realist tradition of spy fiction, the move from the spy as patriot to spy as disillusioned romantic. Rather than the more obvious "The Traitor" or "Mr Harrington Waiting", Cox has chosen the far superior "Giulia Lazzari".

There will be questionable inclusions or omissions in any anthology, and that is emphatically the case here. Given this is an Oxford book, perhaps Cox should have included more literary writers working in the genre such as O Henry, Guy de Maupassant, Mark Twain and Charles Kingsley. The balance too seems strange. Over half the stories come from between the wars, with only one tale, "Risiko" - possibly Ian Fleming's most self-indulgent tale - marking the Cold War's three most important decades. Also, just one woman is represented - Baroness Orczy - and only four foreigners.

John Le Carré's importance is noted in the introduction but not reflected in the text. Perhaps copyright clearance was too high, but surely one of the stories from *The Secret Pilgrim* should be here? Other omissions to my mind include Sapper, Peter O'Donnell (why not a Modesty Blaise tale from *Pieces of Modesty*?) and an example drawn from the rich vein of comic spy writing: Cyril Connolly's "Bond Strikes Camp" comes to mind. Spying may be a serious business but spy fiction is not.

All the same, this is a stimulating collection with some gems, such as AD Divine's "Flood on the Goodwin" and Len Deighton's "Paper Casualty". Cox shows himself again to be a diligent and imaginative anthologist. But the fact remains that just too few spy short stories are being written or published. If the task of the future spy anthology is to be made easier, magazine editors need to give thought to encouraging the genre. For, as a 1994 Edward Hoch tale - loosely based on the Aldrich Ames case - shows here, they continue, even with the end of the Cold War, both to reflect and shape contemporary history.

## Paperbacks

Reviewed by Emma Hagestadt and Christopher Hirst



**The Five Giants** by Nicholas Timmins (Fontana, £9.99)

Her mother is mad, her father is dead, and her sister is a civil servant with a weakness for fairy tales. Hazel has no one to turn to when she discovers her gynaecologist husband is using her womb as a genetic test site. A reproductive satire Fay Weldon would be proud to have mothered.



**A Thousand Miles from Nowhere** by Graham Cooper (Penguin, £5.99)

Coster edged into big rigging with big rigging, and yet he parts across the US. Keen-eyed and witty, his work deserves to reach readers far beyond the truck-stop. It's particularly good on the "ducking and diving" required to attain transcontinental destinations despite manifold obstacles. In Connecticut, for example, the law demands white sheets for cab beds.



**Real Life** by Marsha Hunt (Flamingo, £9.99)

It was the English rain that made Marsha Hunt famous: it thickened up her curls to thick normal size, leading her to a part in *Harlow*. Her engaging autobiography includes memories of glory days in Berkeley and Notting Hill, and a less than flattering portrait of Mick Jagger (spots and all). A "Snade Chick" with attitude.



**The Gospel According to Women** by Karen Armstrong (Fount, £8.99)

"To embrace a woman," wrote Odo of Cluny in the 12th century, "is to embrace a sack of manure." The subjection of women has taken place since Christianity's earliest days. Armstrong's account of how the church stereotypes women is learned, but marred by overstatement, eg. "The anorexic sums up the dangers of the myth of virgin autonomy."



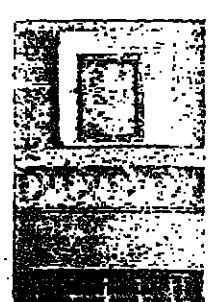
**A Stranger in the Family** by Terry Sanderson (Other Way Press, £9.95)

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**Playland** by John Gregory Dume (Granta, £6.99)

Funny, violent, foul-mouthed, this ambitious Hollywood novel tells the story of Baby Blue Tyler, an ex-child star now on the skids, and the sleazy circle of gangsters and movie tsars surrounding her in the 1940s. Weaving in news items and crime reports, the narrative style owes a bit to John Dos Passos. The tone - sour, flip, knowing - sums up Tinseltown at its most cynically appealing.



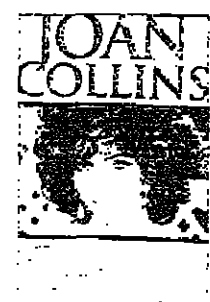
**The Chess Garden** by Brook Hansen (Sceptre, £5.99)

Gorged on cucumber pickles, the children of Dayton, Ohio gather after school to hear Dr Ulysses' letters home, in which he writes of a hand lived in by chess pieces and origami cranes. This turn-of-the-century fable is at times so rich, it gives you heartburn. He's either brilliant or barking.



**The Death of Ayrton Senna** by Richard Williams (Penguin, £5.99)

A well-crafted assessment of the man who "turned grand prix racing into a contact sport". Complex and utterly competitive, Senna was a committed Christian who "needed to go as fast as possible all the time". Williams likens his approach to musical improvisation, quoting one jazz-man on the need to "keep into the unknown". The crash stays a mystery, but Williams touches on a few of racing's dark secrets.



**Too Damn Famous** by Joan Collins (Orion, £5.99)

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## Ecuador is plant-lovers heaven. By Anna Pavord

Birds and flowers came together most spectacularly at Cusin, a 17th-century hacienda in the northern Andes, by far the best of the three

Everywhere you noticed cultivation techniques that reflected a care for water as a resource. We are gradually understanding about the importance of mulching here, but we don't do very much by way of ridging and furrowing



Cut flowers seem to be the boom business at the moment. The *hosteria* we stayed in to the south of Quito was completely hemmed in by acres and acres of polythene tunnel, all growing roses. While sulphur cones burnt away inside the shelters, young women, without face masks or any other protection, were picking the unreally perfect blooms, each on a three foot stem. It put me

When I inquired of one of the birdwatchers in the jungle the name of a brown thing that flashed through my field glasses, he replied grandly, "I don't do flycatchers". So I'll take a leaf from his book and say equally firmly, "I don't do orchids".

The Hacienda Cusin is at San Pablo, Imbabura, Ecuador (06 918013; fax 06 918003).



What should be done about shrubs damaged by the snow falls of February? Evergreens such as **choisya** and the low-growing **Ceanothus thyrsiflorus** repens are the worst hit in my garden. Other friends have been mourning the loss of lilacs and beeches. When branches are cracked only by a thin skin of the bark, there is no point in delaying. Cut them, finish off their misery and get rid of them. Where branches are split, as with my **choisya** and **ceanothus**, I shall leave them both until they have flowered before undertaking major surgery.

As for lilac, you could take the chance to rejuvenate the bush by cutting the whole thing down to about two

**Wintersweet**  
(*Chimonanthus praecox*) can be pruned now, too. Take out spindly stems entirely, cutting them off at the base and shorten the strong growing stems by about a quarter. Tough pruning will make the

**Report house plants** if you think they need it. They needn't necessarily go into a larger pot. Tease old compost away from the roots and set the plant at the same depth in fresh compost in a clean pot. Water it thoroughly, but do not drown it. The nutrients available in the fresh compost will mean that the plant will need no extra feeding for the next six weeks.

By Diana Ross

The common garden snail, *Helix Aspersa*, was extinguished in the British Isles by the Ice Age. The English Channel opened up and cut us off from the Continent before it had time to make its way back again. But then came the Romans, bringing with them their own supply for culinary purposes. Unfortunately, they did not consume them all. Some escaped, naturalised and thrived. And they thrive best in close proximity to humans. For a snail four things are essential: moisture, food, shelter and alkaline soil for the calcium to make their shells. A town garden provides these necessities better than anywhere – a food supply in every reach of the shelter of walls and paving and ideal atmospheric conditions: a small garden is so easy to water. The irony is that the people who provide this ideal environment are 'the very same who suffer most from the snails' presence. They even share the same taste in plants: broad-leaved herbaceous perennials.

approbation or concern for the environment, what can the beleaguered city gardener do? There are the recognised "friendly" methods: grapefruit halves; beer; expensive packs of aluminium sulphate; eggshells, grit or ashes; greasing the rims of plant pots. But in the end the battle, as the summer progresses, is lost, and the hosta leaves are reduced to skeletons, the crumbe to Brussels lace.

The EC has been looking into the use of a suitable nematode as a means of controlling slugs in farming. But it turns out this nematode only fancies a certain type of slug and 1,000 are required to deal with one slug. The cost is therefore prohibitive.

Dully vigilant and knowledgeable of their habitat is probably more useful in dealing with the city snail. Then a decision can be taken on how best to despatch them. Lobbing the catch over the wall next door is totally ineffectual: snails are territorial and can travel up to 40 metres a night; by the following morning they will be back. Added to which, the mucus trail grown snails leave acts as an inhibitor to the younger generation. Kill an adult and the next size down start eating themselves silly in the race to take over the vacant patch.

Which they do. Hermaphroditic, every mature garden snail reproduces itself approximately 200 times a season. They can live for eight years once mature. Happily, snails are not vigilant parents and leave the offspring to fend for themselves. How-

**City snails:**  
should you  
drown  
them, bury  
them, tread  
on them or  
eat them?

ever, one gardener in Hampstead counted her hant last year - 3,000. If each of those 3,000 had lived to produce its 200 offspring, and if only five per cent of those had reached maturity, by the end of 1998 they would number six million. And if she found 3,000 how many did she miss?

How do you despatch 3,000 snails humanely? Appealing creatures, they actually become friendly in captivity. To drown them is heart-breaking - they will keep climbing back out of the barrel, eyes on stalks, bodies straining with the effort. Throwing them out on to the road to take their chance? Christian to the lions. The poor things inch their way painfully over the gritty tarmac, unable to take evasive action when the cars bear down. Squashing them underfoot is quick and not dissimilar to being buried alive.

lar to being hurried about by thrushes. For those with compost heaps, dropping them first into boiling water avoids the rotten fish combined with uric acid smell their decomposition produces. For those without, leaving them on the path for passing wildlife leads to infestations of bluebottles

One gardener took to burying her dead but to bury up to 40 snails a day is, so to speak, quite an undertaking.

Two possible final solutions came from the snail farmer who revealed the friendliness of their natures. His first option he called "gardeners' revenge", which is to say, eat them. But first they must be purged. Two days' starvation in a damp atmosphere in a covered bucket followed by three of feeding (flour or Weetabix) and a further two days' abstinence. Store alive in a warm box until required. Finally, blanch in boiling water and cook in garlic butter.

Should the above solution not appeal, mash up packets of Weetabix and lay trails of the cereal on damp evenings along paths and hard surfaces six inches or so from the flowerbeds. Between 11pm and 1am return with torch, dustpan and brush and sweep everything up again: slugs and snails alike will be heads down in the cereal. Place in covered pail and when convenient release on wasteland at least 40 metres from your garden. Repeat regularly throughout the season.

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# There's more to the National Trust than country piles, says the new head man. There's 20 Forth Road, for a start

By Patricia Cleveland-Peck

"I am at the tiller for the time being, but I'm just one of many," was the modest comment of Martin Drury, who took over as director general of the National Trust at the beginning of the year. "The challenge is to keep the thing on course." However, there are already indications that he will steer this venerable old craft towards her second century with some panache.

It was he who took the innovative step of acquiring the first house connected with a living person – and a pop singer at that, rather than a Duke or retired statesman. Hearing that 20 Forth Road, Liverpool – the council house where Paul McCartney spent his teenage years – was for sale, Drury felt it was something the Trust should at least consider. "I was taken by several things," he told me. "Firstly it was really a rather good building from the last breath of a working-class housing movement – the garden suburb movement – which does great credit to this country."

More importantly, he saw it as "an immediate link with the creation of music which touched millions". This link is documented by a series of photographs taken in the house by Paul's brother Mike McCartney, showing, for example, Paul and John on the sofa with their guitars with Paul's maths exercise book open, revealing the words "I will hold your hand".

Reaction from the membership has been mixed: broadly those from the North approve, while those from the South indicate some degree of puzzlement. Drury is unrepentant: "Any organisation can so easily get turgid and backward looking. We are preoccupied with the past quite a lot, so it is good to be edging forward."

In fact, Drury regrets that the public perception of the National Trust is so closely linked to houses, although he served for 11 years as Historic Buildings Secretary and is an expert on antique furnishings. "Our country houses are very important and I'm very proud of them, but they do fuel the false impression that the Trust is very rich," he says. "In fact most of the big country houses run at a loss and the Trust's financial position is precarious. It needs more members."

There is another reason why the stately home perception displeases Drury: "It devalues the rest of our work, which is just as remarkable. We own 506,000 acres of countryside and through Enterprise Neptune, which is the single most important campaign the Trust has undertaken, we have protected 502 miles of coastline." Once land is acquired, the Trust has a unique power to declare it inalienable,

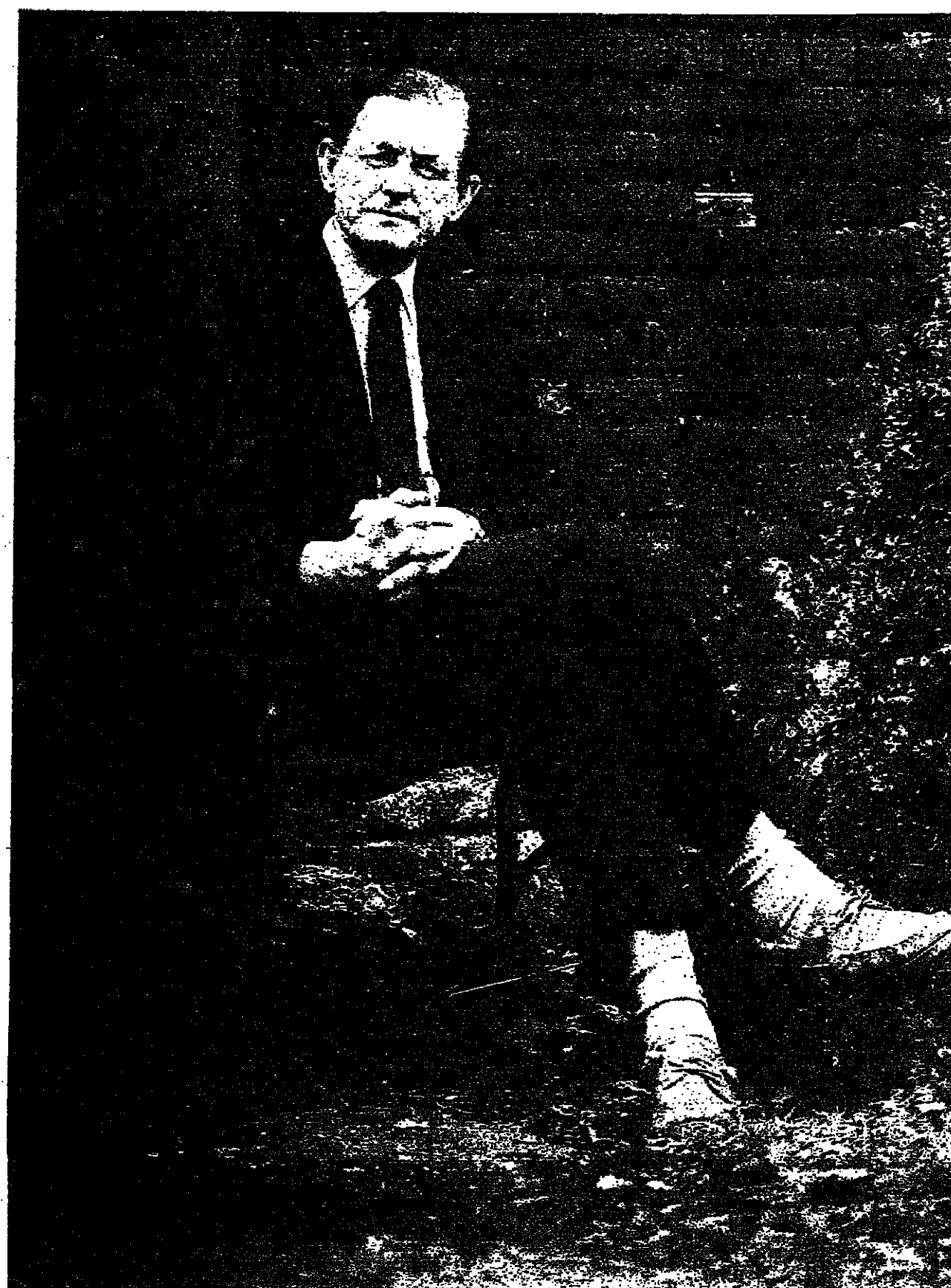
which means it cannot be sold, mortgaged or compulsorily purchased without recourse to Parliament.

In the light of present conflicts over road proposals, I asked Mr Drury about relations between the Trust and the Department of Transport (DoT). "In most cases the DoT tries to avoid our inalienable land," he said, "but when threatened we are obliged by statute to defend it – and we do. That is the situation at Hindhead. The proposal to take the A3 by-pass on concrete stilts across the Devil's Punchbowl was rejected as unthinkable. The Trust insists that the road is run through a tunnel, an option it also wants to see adopted at the even more sensitive World Heritage site of Stonehenge. At Golden Cap in Dorset, where the plan was to run the A35 through some of the Trust's loveliest coastal land, the DoT listened to the Trust's arguments and reduced its proposal from a double to a single carriageway. This is still considered unacceptable and the Trust opposes it as publicly as possible."

"We are not against the car," Drury added, "but the present rate at which life is dominated by the car cannot be sustained. At the last AGM it was suggested that the number of visitors arriving by car should be reduced from 90 per cent to 60 per cent. A tall order, but a move in the right direction." When Prior Park near Bath opens this season, all visitors will have to walk or come by public transport – there are no parking facilities. The Trust has initiated other strategies; work on 12 cycle tracks to run from urban centres to Trust properties; cheaper combined public transport and entry tickets for some properties and the continuing publication of listing available public transport in the handbook to enable those who are carless to reach the properties – in theory at least.

"I want the National Trust to be appreciated by a wider sector of the population," said Drury, who is fully aware of the middle-class, middle-England image of Trust members. He pointed to three schemes – "Linking People with Places" – operating in Plymouth, Birmingham and Newcastle, which reach out to connect people from depressed inner city areas with the amenities that nearby Trust properties can offer them. In Newcastle the project has apparently been so successful that older people and single mothers have formed their own groups to organise walks, field trips and weekends.

This seems very much more in the spirit of Octavia Hill, the Trust founder whose aim was to create "outdoor sitting-rooms for the poor", rather than the



stereotypical huntin' shootin' and fishin' stately home incumbent whose image the words "National Trust" conjure up for so many.

Hunting, of course, has caused the Trust some headaches over the years. What are the new director general's views on it?

"Our policy is to allow hunting – which is perfectly legal after all – where it has traditionally taken place and not to allow it where it would damage habitats or if the land has been given to us with a no-hunting condition." He is aware of the intense pas-

sion the subject provokes: "To some, mostly country people (and it is these we depend on as employees, tenants and benefactors in our work), it is an inalienable right, while to others – many of them the very people we are doing the work for – it is something utterly repugnant. It is best for us to keep out of the argument."

Martin Drury is more concerned with finding ways in which Trust properties can be shown more imaginatively. He has just launched the "Thousand Threads" project, so called because it seeks to weave a tapestry of information by means

of a series of high technology "Gateways" at 30 properties. If it comes off (support of £11.35 million has been sought from the Millennium Commission), virtual reality, CD-ROMS, fly-by-wire models and interactive hands-on displays will be used. This will help to deepen the appeal of the properties and improve visitor enjoyment, while an even larger audience will be reached both here and abroad through CD-ROM and the Internet.

Up-to-the-minute stuff indeed for the staid old National

Trust, demonstrating Mr Drury's belief that it is essential to move with the times. "I want to spread the social base of the membership and also get over the fact that the Trust is a charity in need, not an opulent great ship sailing confidently towards the future. I want to improve the schools education programme; children of all races are the British people of the future, and it is their National Trust." He is also keenly aware that the Trust has to earn public affection by giving people what they want. Which brings us back to the Beales House.

## COUNTRY PURSUITS



A day in the life of Ray Dobbins, water bailiff on the Wye

"I love my job. I've lived on the Wye all my life – I was born in Monmouth, but moved to Rhayader when I was two. It's not regular work: it all depends on the fish. At spawning – autumn – we're out every night around here. We might start at six and not get back until seven the next morning. Often we stake out a ford, then at least you know you're protecting something, even if no poachers come along. Otherwise, we walk up a brook – that's the only way to find out if there's anything going on. Although I have two reserve bailiffs – part-timers who help out as and when needed – we've got a huge area to cover: about 150 miles of river in all."

"From February to October we're looking for netters near Monmouth – outside our patch. That can mean a long night (I've done 18 hours on the trot there), especially when we've caught someone and they have to be charged."

"We also do shifts around Leominster, usually at weekends. That means starting at 2.30pm to catch night fishermen using worms to catch trout. It's illegal and I don't know why they do it – there's no money in it – they're poachers at heart."

"There's been a huge shift in poaching. When I began in 1979 everyone was at it and it got a bit nasty. Once I found a dozen salmon heads on my car bonnet and another time it was sprayed with paint. My two reserves were very badly beaten up and a look-out was shot at till he quit."

"Then the magistrates fined someone £946 in Rhayader court and for two years we never saw a light on the river. Today we're left with a handful of middle-aged poachers, but there's none of the young lads coming in. Now we probably only catch a couple of local guys each winter. Last year we surprised two poachers and one decided to hide in the river. Luckily he was in shallow water and we found him before he got too cold. Near Monmouth poachers have been drowned netting. That guy was fined about £250."

"Although the enforcement is the most important part of the job, I prefer monitoring. In early spring we plant boxes in the river with 100 fertile salmon eggs in each. We lift them about March to see what progress they've made and carry on checking through the summer."

"When it gets a bit warmer we go electro-fishing. We stretch two nets across the river about 30 metres apart and walk slowly between them with an electrode. This stuns the fish, which we measure and weigh. If any look out of condition, we take scale samples for analysis."

"At the moment we're three years into a project to put up nest boxes for barn owls and we're helping the fishery owners to remove silt from spawning beds that aren't doing so well. It seems to be working, too – last year was the best spawning on the Wye since 1988, but that might just be the hot weather."

"One of the best things about the scientific work is being out on the river during the day and I've been lucky enough to have seen four or five otters during daytime over the past couple of years. They may take the occasional salmon, but they're beautiful creatures."

Daniel Butler

## A little local trouble

The ParaSearch Investigation Research Unit may be called in to investigate strange goings on in a small Shropshire town. A month ago two workmen appeared from the mist as they made West's old town hall safe after it was gutted by fire. One theory is that the ghost is that of teenage maid Jane Churn, who accidentally caused a fire in 1677. Mrs Pauline Dee, a town councillor, said it could be the ghost of a man who helped build the town hall in 1911 and who later killed himself after a row with his father.

Members of the public in North Devon are being asked to help identify tanker drivers who are dumping untreated sewage in country lanes between Bideford and Torrington. The illegal dumping of septic tank waste was first reported towards the end of last year, and although the operators have been spotted, officials at Devon County Council's waste regulation department need registration numbers. Kevin Davies, of the department, said: "This waste contains pathogenic organisms, including salmonella and hepatitis. It also poses an environmental threat to wildlife."

## 'When I lobbed logs into my trailer, she went berserk'

When working with a chain saw, it is as well to concentrate. Two occasions on which I let my mind wander stand out in my memory with disconcerting clarity. On one, I felled a witch elm on to my own trailer, and almost on to my wife; on the other, I let the chain touch the inside of my knee – which meant immediate evacuation to hospital.

I was therefore keeping my wits about me the other afternoon as I cut into a pile of tree-tops that a farmer had dragged out into a field. Suddenly, I became aware that something had passed close behind me at high speed. Taking my finger off the throttle trigger, I looked round. There was Cindy, the sheepdog from the farm, coming in fast at an angle on another run.

I was glad to be wearing boots with high, padded ankles. On her regular beat, outside the farmyard, Cindy makes it her duty to give the bum's rush to any vehicle passing along the lane. From her favourite ambush-point at one corner of the barn, she hurtles out, barking furiously, and races beside the car, snapping at its wheels.



DUFF HART-DAVIS

Visitors on foot are no more welcome. Even when I enter into friendly conversation with her owner, she gives off menacing growls. Although wagging her tail, she looks as though she may sink her teeth into me at any moment. When riding in his pick-up truck, she is aggression personified.

What, then, were her motives in making these high-speed passes in the field? Rather than risk having jaws close on my Achilles tendon, I stopped the saw, took off my helmet and made overtures.

Off her own territory, Cindy was a different animal. She wagged her tail, licked my hand, allowed me to chuck her under the chin, frisked about and generally made herself agreeable. Yet

when I began to lob logs into my trailer, she went berserk, racing in circles, leaping high into the air, and uttering strangled howls as each missile fell out of her reach. Clearly, she wanted action, and in particular sticks thrown for her to chase.

I chose a thin piece of wood and flung it. She went after it like smoke, pounced, gnashed, tossed it into the air and abandoned it – as if it was a rat and she was saying, "There you are, that's how I kill 'em." A couple more sticks received similar treatment. Immediately after she had dealt with each one, she came tearing back for the next.

But then, as a longer branch landed on the grass, she did not shake it or throw it about. Instead, she seized it and bore it off in her mouth, galloping the whole way home. Two, three, four hundred yards up the field she went, until she squeezed under the gate and disappeared towards the farmyard. Ten minutes later she came back – and this time there was no fooling about. The first stick I threw found favour: she picked it up and sprinted for base. "Good

God!" I thought. "Have they trained her to bring home firewood?"

Inquiries revealed that they had done no such thing: the sticks had not reached the farm. They must have gone into some secret cache. I was left reflecting on how difficult it is to discern animals' motives, and how dangerous it can be to take good temper for granted.

Few creatures can have been more deceptive than our champion ram. Agamemnon – that arch destroyer of fence-posts. It is true that his final preparation for a charge – three steps backwards and one to the side, like a rugby player lining up for a place-kick – always gave him away at the last moment; but even when he was harbouring the most dastardly thoughts, the expression on his face never changed, and only someone who knew him well could divine that if he started to lick his lips or wag his tail, it was time to watch out.

So with Cindy. We may have become buddies in the field, but I still believe that if I took any liberties on her home ground, she would bite me to the bone.

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So there is a certain irony that Washington is expressing outrage at Cuba's downing of two light aircraft, and endeavouring to cut travel to the island. The frequent charter flights between Miami and Havana, which have become so popular that a 747 has to be used for the 100-mile flight, are to end. An opportunity, perhaps, for Laker's Bahamas-registered company to step in and offer connecting flights via Nassau. Sir Freddie, the man who built his airline jodging the Communist blockade during the Berlin airlift, could make a new fortune, helping Castro's Communists beat the capitalist blockade. The last battle of the Cold War is being fought on the Straits of Florida, and the losers are American tourists.

Simon Calder followed the century-old footsteps of Conan Doyle's detective into the uncompromising vastness of Dartmoor

Holmes left town nearly a century ago. In his crime-fighting place are a few optimistic signs (perhaps aimed at the pessimistic 600 inmates) stating "This is a Neighbourhood Watch area." The hotel has closed down, too, and become a tourism office. Its ungainly neo-classical columns now draw tourists on the

You pick up the Abbott's Way south-east of Princetown, and follow it over a lunar landscape riven by infant brooks. When this was a great highway rather than a forgotten byway, the only fords were the stepping stones across the waterways. Deeper tracts are crossed on clapper bridges, slabs of granite slammed over gabbling streams. The track skirts Fox Tor, fords the embryonic River Plym and takes you into terrain



are left with the ancients, whose standing stones and cairns deck the heath and heather to commemorate the long-dead. Occasional flashes of colour provide the only respite from this alien, monochromatic world. Patches of fern have been burnt and beaten into ruddy submission by sun and wind, matching the ochre tones of the iron-rich Red Lake Mire. Vivid green moss clings to the dark Dartmoor granite – the stone used for Nelson's Column, in Victorian mimicry of standing stones on the moor.

Take care out there. DANGER AREA is about right.

**Dartmoor information:** High Moorland Visitor Centre, The Old Duchy Hotel, Tavistock Road, Princetown, Devon PL20 6GF (01822 890414).

**Safe walking:** good boots, warm clothing and waterproofs are essential clothing. Follow Shroton Holmes's example and 'send down to Standards for the Ordnance map'. Standards (0171-836 2411) and other map retailers sell the Ordnance Survey's 1:25,000 map of Dartmoor, price £5.40.

**Availing bullets:** call 01837 52939 to find out what the army's training plans are, and watch for red flags and lights warning of live firing.

**Good reading:** the best edition of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* by Arthur Conan Doyle is the one published by the Oxford University Press, price £3.99.

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# Missing the cars, crime and amusement arcades? That's just Scilly

By Martin Scudamore

Next Stop New York! would be an appropriate signpost at this far flung corner of Britain. All transatlantic races, whether they involve Blue Riband liners or Branson, begin or end at Bishop's Rock lighthouse at the western extreme of the Isles of Scilly. Looking towards America, you can only try to imagine the vastness of the ocean curving away out of sight. And behind you, the rest of the Scilly archipelago is only marginally more inhabited. The people who do live here recently joined the campaign to introduce double summer time, to allow them to make better use of the lighter evenings. The bid failed, although for a while there was talk (not totally tongue-in-cheek) of declaring a unilateral time shift. In many ways, not just because of daylight hours, Scilly is out of step with the rest of the country.

It's early March here too, but in this blessed corner of the country, it won't seem as if the landscape is only just emerging from winter. Spring comes early to Scilly; indeed for the horticulturalists, who make their living from providing blooms long before growers elsewhere can compete, the winter never really happened. Even during the recent cold snap in the rest of Britain the islands escaped virtually frost free. Now the main growing season is over, but while the tiny sheltered fields are ploughed and left fallow ready for next season's crop, the hedgerows are alive with wild narcissi and daffodils.

The Atlantic laps the scattering of rocks where the bird and seal populations vastly outnumber the humans. The tranquillity is jealously guarded - there is virtually no new development - and, in contrast to virtually any other seaside resort in Britain, each year pretty well all the accommodation is taken. The lodgings limit means that crowds fail to threaten the peace even at the peak of summer. You can have half a mile or more of clean, white-sandy beach and dunes to yourself in the middle of August. There is not a single amusement arcade, few cars, almost no crime, no litter - nothing tacky at all, yet it's not snobbish, exclusive or unwelcoming. Chugging open boats, with captains as

cheery as they are knowledgeable, comprise the principal mode of transport between the islands. The informality of the system captures the relaxing embrace of a Scilly holiday. You roll up at the jetty at around 10 in the morning and choose your destination for the day. The boatmen will lay on as many craft as necessary to suit the demand. It may seem an uncertain way to travel around an isolated group of islands - but it seems to work; you rarely hear of anyone being stranded. Special trips include bird or seal-watching jaunts to the uninhabited outer islands and rocks, or to Bishop's Rock, and evening rides to follow and cheer on the gig races - a little piece of tradition kept up by the local oarsmen and women.

These brightly coloured pilots' boats, some of them over 150 years old, are probably the only gigs you'll see. If you've got gregarious teenagers who want a disco in the evenings, and are not exactly thrilled by the idea of a walk round the headland in the rain, (there are few indoor attractions), Scilly is probably not for you. But we regulars all have our favourite bits of Scilly. For me, St. Mary's 9-hole golf course high on the hills over the harbour, a glorious sea view from every tee; St. Martin's beaches; Cromwell's bean-tin of a castle on Trecoo; Bryher's hills and coves and awesome Hell Bay; St. Agnes (with its siamese twin Gugh; joined at low tide by a narrow sand bar) and its tearooms and Turk's Head pub.

And all the time there is the sea and the sea-birds - you come back knowing your black-backed from your herring gulls, your gannets from your terns and of course your comorants from your shags. You haven't lived until you've seen puffins, clumsy on land but acrobatic in the air, or watched from a little boat late in the evening for the return of the Manx Shearwater from a day spent in the Bay of Biscay: super fliers, but they aren't land until its dark, for fear of becoming supper for the gulls.

Holidays in Scilly leave unforgettable memories. The boat setting off from St. Mary's in a strange morning mist over an absolutely still sea, with the sun only beginning to break through as we reached Trecoo, but promising a scorching day; a morning spent looking at the impressive arrays of

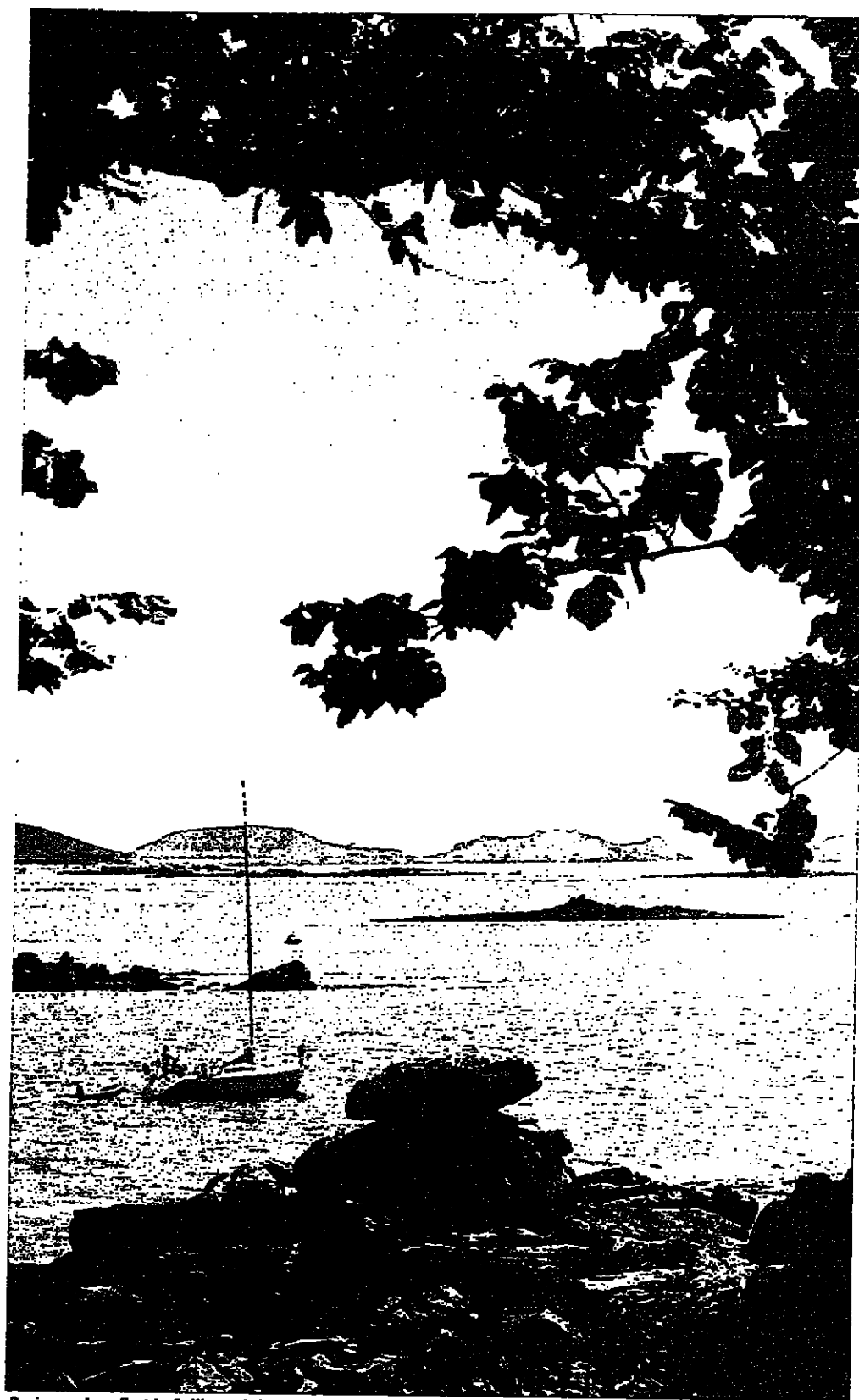
## Getting there

By boat: Two and a half hours from Penzance on the *Scillonian III*, run by the Isles of Scilly Steamship Company (01736 62009). There are two return sailings a day in the season, one at other times. The adult return fare is £67, children half price. By air: Isles of Scilly Skybus Ltd (0345 105 555) has flights direct to St. Mary's from Bristol, Exeter, Newquay or Plymouth as well as Land's End (15 minute flight). Inclusive train-and-plane prices from anywhere in the country are available. The adult return fare from Land's End is £85, children at half price. By helicopter from Penzance to St. Mary's or Trecoo with British International (01736 63871). The journey time is 20 minutes, the standard adult return is £85, children under 12 fly for half price.

## Accommodation

It's all set out in a guide produced by the Isles of Scilly Tourist Office, which also updates the accommodation leaflet every month, showing what's still available. Self-catering accommodation fills up first, and is already largely full for school holiday times in 1996. For a brochure, telephone 01720 422536, fax 01720 422049 or write to The Isles of Scilly Tourist Information Centre, Penzance, St. Mary's, Isles of Scilly TR21 0JL.

exotic and tropical plants and trees in the Abbey Gardens, followed by a visit to Valhalla, the resting place for dozens of wooden figureheads and stern plates from wrecked ships; a fish-and-chip supper in Hugh Town, before embarking in the little boats again to follow the gigs. This evening was a "swap race" where each crew had to exchange their familiar gig with the crew from one of the other islands. After a rousing finish, in which the Men-a-Vaur crew won by a length in Golden Eagle, we strolled up to Buzza Hill to watch the sun dipping down into the Atlantic over the twin hills of Samson. Maybe the mystery is not why people return year after year, but why they ever go back home at all.



Spring arrives first in Scilly, and the locals are asking for double summer time

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# Look, no sticks

If, as they say, traditional skiing is a dying industry, snow boarding is a booming one. After a trip to Zell am See, Charlie English could see why

If you took the recent spate of snowboarding-related advertising to heart, you might think the boarder's world was inhabited solely by danger-loving types. People who jump out of aeroplanes in armchairs, or who like to throw themselves from tall buildings with only a swatch of state-of-the-art fabric to stop them hitting the ground. The sort who, according to the ads, like to drink Pepsi Max or fly through Gatwick Airport. There are a number of snowboarders who are like that. The self-styled hard core who do it, as an editorial in the snowboarding magazine *On Board* says, because "the days of the Wild West are long gone". This is why, it says with some justification, "sports like surfing, snowboarding and skateboarding graduate from activities to lifestyles".

But there is another, probably much larger, group of snowboarders who are riding on the coat-tails of extreme-sport chic without suffering the potential pitfalls (serious injury, repeated use of the word "man"). This is the soft periphery, where I like to think I belong. We can talk about it a lot, but are only infrequently called to leave the sofa.

The six of us, most of whom had skied before but only one of whom — me — had snowboarded, booked up at the Austrian resort of Zell am See; we'd bought our time-slice in the glamour of the winter sports scene. This is where it's done! I thought, stepping from the bus. There are people here who do it for six months a year! And, after hiring a battered old board that had cost more per day than I'd pay to buy it in a second-hand shop back home, and after getting into the gondola for the first journey to the top of the mountain, the cold excitement set in.

On the first morning, thinks I, I would explain to my skiing comrades how the thing is done. We would take gondolas and chairlifts to the flat top of a 2,000m peak, the beginners would be mixed into a state of snowboarding toddlerdom



Advanced skiers may look good, but snowboarders look better. Photos: Skishoot

and it would be downhill from there. Except that Zell am See's chairlifts are exclusively ski-on, ski-off affairs that assume a degree of snowboarding competence. So we started at the top of the first gondola, and the top of the black ("difficult") run. There, only Phil was committed to a snowboard. "The plan is," I said to him, "that you lock your boots to the board here [tightens up bindings] and then you stand up." He wobbled upright. "Then you set off down there [falls. Gets up]. Turning," I shouted after him,

"is just a question of pushing the back round!"

A couple of painful hours later Phil had determined that he needed professional help, and bought two hours with Marco, a pony-tailed Austrian instructor. "He told me, 'Your shoulders are your steering wheel,'" said Phil, "and he stands there with his arms spread out, twisting from the waist." It was good advice: Phil could almost immediately turn in both directions — the hardest part. It gets a lot easier when you don't have to go down

a run on your hands and knees.

They say skiing is a dying industry: snowboarding, on the other hand, is booming. It isn't difficult to see why. Advanced skiers, weaving down a piste with skis and knees in perfect sympathy, look great, but an advanced snowboarder, swaying one way then the other, hands inches above the snow, looks much better. When last I went snowboarding, in Tignes a few years ago, there were only five or six snowboards out each day. This time, every fourth person on the slopes was on a snowboard, and 75 per cent of those were teenage Europeans in the most stylish snowboard wear.

The gear (called Bastard, Pervit, Nuts) draws styles from pop music: it can be as baggy as a New York rapper's, or tight-fitting and collarless like a Manchester spiv's. Ski-wear looks old by comparison. It's unsurprising that boarders get up a lot of people's noses, and skiers' noses in particular. Snowboarders don't go out of their way to make skiing friends. Nick, skiing down a steep-walled gully, had the stuffing knocked out of him by a teen on a board called Bitch.

"Bitch" was sitting up on the sidewall, then without looking pushed himself upright, flipped the board round and shot across the front of Nick's skis, knocking him over, boots snapping out of his bindings, hat flying, sunglasses smashing on his face. The boarder, further down, looked back, then pushed on. "What happened?" asked a skier who stopped to help. But Nick later became a convert. "They're certainly the coolest people on the mountain," he said. "And the packs of kids — they're like packs of wolves. They sit there on the side of the slopes watching, then suddenly all get up and set off together. I loved it." Phil said: "I'd definitely do it again." John said: "I wish I'd learnt when I was younger, when falling down wasn't so hard." Richard, sadly, wasn't there. He was in hospital because he'd broken his wrist on the last day.



## All you need to know about snowboarding

### Equipment

The chief innovation for winter '96 '97 is the "step-in binding". With this system, the rider clips into his/her bindings by simply stepping on to them in the same manner as with ski bindings. The difference is that the bindings are hidden under the boots and the boots are the usual soft snowboard boots modified and stiffened. You therefore have the freedom of a normal snowboard boot and binding set up with the convenience of a ski binding. Many manufacturers have developed their own versions of the system and prices will probably drop, so 1997 looks set to be the year of the step-in. The "360-degree cap" is the name of a new board-manufacturing technique. Traditional construction relies on the sides of the board being formed by a strip of plastic. Cap construction dispenses with this strip and allows the sides to be formed from the fibreglass layers, resulting in a tighter, stronger board. It also looks superb. The major manufacturers all have boards that use this technology in next winter's ranges.

### Resorts

Places with a variety of terrain will score highly with snowboarders, as will resorts that get more than their fair share of powder snow or have vast expanses of off-piste. The more advanced boarder will be impressed by purpose-built obstacles and jumps. Bulgaria is a recommended choice for snowboarders. It's cheap and the terrain is awesome. Avoriaz and Les Arcs in France have always been popular with snowboarders. In Austria, try Axamer Lizum just outside Innsbruck and in Italy, Madonna di Campiglio. Andorra has Pas de la Casa which is blessed with very reliable snow. In the US, try Whistler, Lake Louise or the Arapahoe Basin.

Al Fleming is a freelance writer and runs the Snowboard Klinik.

Snow's up by Chris Gill

## Duty free in Italy

Italian ski resorts are currently good value, thanks to the weak lira. But one stands out — in principle, at least — as being better value than the rest: Livigno, a large village isolated in a high, remote valley close to the Swiss border.

Livigno is a duty-free enclave. What you might expect the resort's status to mean is that prices would generally be lower than in other Italian resorts. In practice, the difference in the everyday cost of living is slight: when I travelled from Livigno to the nearby resort of Bormio last winter, lunch on the mountain and an après-ski beer seemed to cost much the same in both.

Perhaps a serious spirits drinker would reach a different conclusion. But the real difference between Livigno and neighbours like Bormio is the duty-free resort's heavyweight shopping opportunities. The long main street and its side-shoots are flanked by smart clothes shops, camera and video shops, perfume shops and, of course, ski shops. And, yes, the prices are temptingly low.

When I was there, one of my fashion-conscious companions filled a small suitcase with new shirts, trousers and sweaters. Whether they actually represented quite the savings he perceived, we'll never know. (Stroll down the main street of any Italian resort these days and you're likely to be impressed by at least some of the prices.)

But the same companion also studied ski equipment, and calculated handsome savings on a set of Salomon skis and bindings: sadly, the skis he wanted were sold out (this was March, after all). I was sorely tempted by a Nikon compact camera on sale for perhaps £50 less than in Britain. But in the end I, too, kept my plastic dry.

and contented myself with a tankful of duty-free petrol.

I was deterred partly by nagging doubts about the liability to pay duty and tax on goodies bought in Livigno when you take them elsewhere. My subsequent conversations with HM Customs and Excise have not been exactly conclusive, but it does seem that goods bought in Livigno are treated just like goods bought in a duty-free shop at an airport or on a Channel ferry: you're allowed to import a few quid's worth, but you soon start to pay the appropriate tax and duty.

The situation is slightly complicated by the need to import your goodies into "mainland" Italy or Switzerland before bringing them home. In principle, it is possible to defer the payment of duty until you return home. Whether in practice you can count on the average Italian or Swiss customs person to go along with this is doubtful.

But I dare say that most people who buy a camera, a bag of clothes or a pair of skis in Livigno have no intention of paying any duty. Naturally, I couldn't possibly encourage such behaviour. But if that's your plan you may wish to know that I found the Italian border guards more vigilant than the Swiss.

Perhaps Swiss duty-evaders look first to their own duty-free enclave of Samnaun, on the Austrian border (and sharing a ski area with Ischgl). They thereby save the cost of changing francs into lire — but, of course, they also lose the advantage of low Italian prices. For bargain-hunting British skiers, a better alternative is Andorra, in the Pyrenees, where the savings on duty do seem to translate into lower bar prices as well as lower shop prices.

## Snow report

It has been a great week in the Alps, at least for people skiing at high altitude. In the wake of the worthwhile snowfalls of the previous week, many resorts have seen some sunny days and clear, crisp nights. Not surprisingly, resort-level runs have suffered, especially in low or south-facing resorts — but at least those runs have remained skiable, even where they have become heavy, icy or patchy. And the skiing on higher slopes, where temperatures have remained lower, has been excellent. The snowfalls of ten days ago favoured the western Alps (France and western Italy) rather



than the east (Austria and the Dolomites), but right now, wherever in the Alps you look, altitude is the key to the best conditions. Here in Verbier, the streets are clear of snow but there's a foot of snow on the

chalet roofs, and the mountain is in excellent shape. As I write on Friday morning, the weather is changing, with lower temperatures and more cloud, at least in Switzerland, with a light snowfall just beginning. Meanwhile, the Pyrenees are still offering superb skiing, and the eastern European resorts are fully open even if the lower runs are getting a bit thin. Conditions in the USA and Canada are excellent, with fresh snow in the last few days right across the western US — there are reports of spectacular depths of snow in Utah (Park City and Snowbird, for example), in particular.

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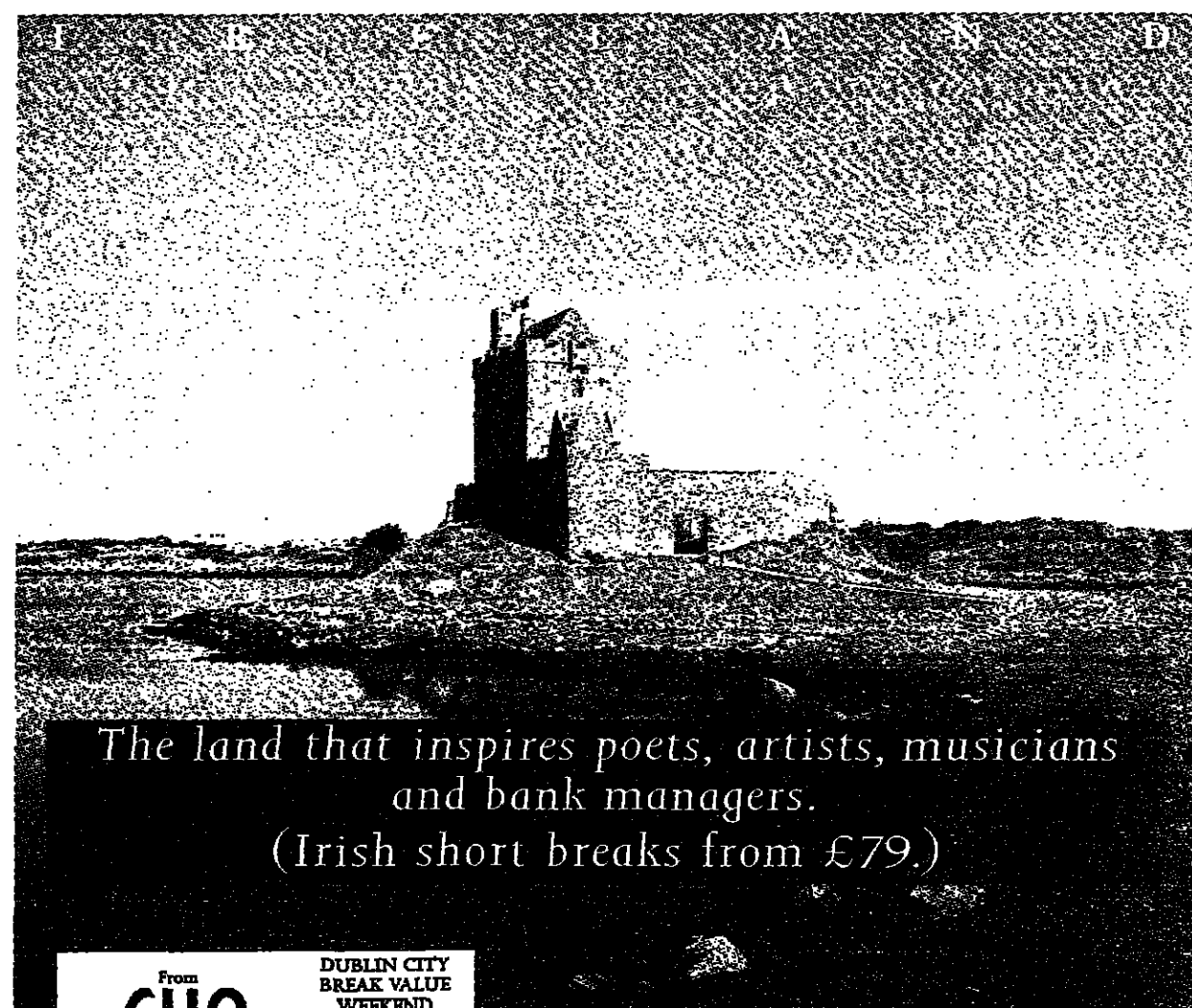
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sometime

The Waterway



# Sometimes, only the best will do

Tropical flowers in the bedroom, lunch brought to the beach. That's Mustique. By Rosie Millard

Now I don't wish to knock all those budget guidebooks that tell you how to crash out in Manhattan for a dollar, or give tips on how to create a tasty meal of lentils while on a bike. But sometimes a holiday of hedonism is all that will do. I mean glamour: the sort of trip that requires nail varnish and dressing up for dinner.

Barbados, with its true winter "season", is a good contender. "Our season runs from mid-December to mid-April," says Trevor Ramsay, owner of the Treasure Beach Hotel on the western side of the island. "It's a little more, well, polished than the season in resorts in places like Africa." The hotel, which consists of 25 private suites, surrounds a pool and garden blooming with hibiscus, bougainvillea and jasmine. You can laze on the beach every day, and drink cocktails and dance to calypso bands every night. Best of all, between November and March, there are no kids under 12. But is there glamour? "Oh yes, we have the stars here. Dave Allen, Brian Ferry. And Mark Pitman was married here. It was in *Hellot*."

Well, quite. But I don't want to have my holiday wrecked by invasions from *Hellot*. I want private luxury, true get-away-from-it-all glamour. So I flew away from Barbados in a nine-seater Cessna and went to the tiny island of Mustique.

There's just one landing strip, carved out between high, heavily wooded mountains. There are no night flights: in emergencies, people on the island simply drive along to the airport and line their cars up with the headlights full on, to provide illumination. The airport itself is a small hut with a bench for Customs, and, weirdly, a lending library, two bamboo bookshelves stacked with titles such as *Fishing with Ray Bergman*. And that's it. Celebrity marriages? I don't think so. The paparazzi have their cameras removed on arrival. Welcome to the most exclusive island in the Caribbean.

Mustique was put on the map by Princess Margaret who was given a plot of land here as a wedding present by Colin Tennant. Tennant had bought the three-mile long island in 1959 for £43,000. It was a lot of money for not very much: an empty wilderness with no fresh water and a rampaging population of mosquitoes (hence the name). But Tennant had a vision and in subsequent years he managed to woo the talented, the artistic and the mega-rich from all over the world in order to achieve it.

Margaret built a villa on her plot of land and brought her social set along for Christmas. Gradually, they too bought their own plots of land and built their villas; and thus began the history of Mustique's glittering exclusivity. You can practically smell it on arrival. Brushed beaches, clipped grass and blue skies frame multi-million dollar houses in a guaranteed mosquito-free atmosphere thanks to frequent visits from sprayer planes. The houses aren't built on the



Yes, it's expensive. But such is the experience that you only need two or three days on the Caribbean island to feel like a superstar

beaches. They don't need to be. These people have their own pools, their own jacuzzis; hey, they even come equipped with golf-simulation cinemas equipped just so you can practise your swing. Who lives here? Oh, the Jaggers, royals, Swiss bankers. Serious money. "Didn't you know that David Bowie's just sold up, for four?" Four what? Thousands? Hundreds of thousands? "No, stupid. Millions." In Mustique, everyone speaks in multiples of six zeros.

For mere mortals, Mustique is probably the best place in the world where you can still play at being a superstar for a week. More private club than resort, this is one place in the Caribbean where parties from cruise ships are not welcome. There's only one hotel, for a start. The Cotton House, an 18th-century coral and stone cotton warehouse that was taken over by Tennant and as his HQ in the Sixties, is now a deluxe hotel and centre of the island's social scene.

Decorated in a somewhat outrageous style by the theatrical designer Oliver Messel, the Cotton House now has 20 suites dotted about the grounds surrounding the main building, and a reputation for service that relegates the average five-star British hotel to something approximating a motorway service station.

Oh yes, there's all the regular luxuries like tropical flowers in the bedroom, ice-buckets changed regularly and cocktails on arrival, but lunch brought by hand to whichever beach you desire? Surely some mistake? Not at all. If you wish to pretend that you're in some Fleming-esque fantasy, you can do so. A brief word at breakfast by the pool is all that's necessary. So after a morning swimming, snorkelling or going for a gallop along one of the island's pure white, combed beaches, you simply plunk yourself down at the appointed site with a towel and plenty of factor 25 and wait for nourishment. At the pre-arranged moment, it will arrive.

British people not used to this sort of treatment might find Mustique hard to swallow. It's also rather expensive: the price for a room for two per night can rival the cost of your transatlantic flight. But you only need two or three days here, so intense is the experience. After lunch on the beach, full English tea is served in the main dining room. The room still has Colin Tennant's original decorations: armchairs studded with cowrie shells are flanked by Indian chests and stuffed birds in glass cases. Every day at tea-time, triangular sandwiches arrive on trays, plus *petits fours*, banana bread and Caribbean tea with condensed milk.

Every Tuesday night the management of the Cotton House invites hotel guests and anyone else currently staying on the island, to a cocktail party. Unlike with most "drinks with the management" invitations, everyone turns up. Mustique is so small and the amusements on the island are so limited, that there's not much else to do. So you could end up having drinks with Mick Jagger, Spike Lee, David and Serena Linley, and Billy Joel, all at the same time. Then you get invited to pop back to their pads for dinner. It happens. "Don't take it too seriously," we are warned. "Casual, informal elegance. Wear your little black dress if you like, but with bare feet." Bare feet? For dancing on the beach. But don't forget to have a pedicure.

Rosie Millard paid £300 for a London-Barbados ticket through Golden Lion Travel (01293 567800). The Treasure Beach in Barbados and the Cotton House in Mustique are both bookable in the UK through Unique Hotels (01453 855801). At Treasure Beach, the cheapest room until 12 April is £278 without meals; from 13 April, the price halves to £134. From now until mid-April, a deluxe room at the Cotton House costs £370 half-board including tax. During the low season (15 April-15 December), the price falls to £253.

## something to declare



### A likely story

"Privatisation will result in maintained consistency in our on-time performance" - LIAT Islander, the inflight magazine of Leeward Islands Air Transport

This claim, if true, is not good news for those accustomed to LIAT's consistent unreliability. But aficionados of the Caribbean's uniquely unpredictable airline will be relieved to hear that the recent sell-off has done nothing to change its style. Over the years stranded passengers have had ample time to invent alternatives for its acronym: Leaving Island Any Time, Luggage In Another Terminal or, Late If At All.

A recent trip through the Eastern Caribbean reminded me of why the airline inspires a BR-style mix of affection and loathing among its users. Its most quixotic habit is not to display departure times, since this would make it a hostage to fortune. One therefore depends on announcements, which are normally inaudible and timed to coincide with the arrival of an incoming jet. In St Kitts, one announcement announced that an announcement would shortly tell us what had happened to our missing plane. Departing passengers have been known to rush out onto

the tarmac in pursuit of a departing plane, only to find it was an entirely different service, equally unannounced.

Once on board, don't be surprised by a few unscheduled island stops en route. Conversely, if nobody else wants to go to the same island as you, market forces may prevail and your destination may be dropped altogether - an element of last-minute suspense in every flight. On the plus side, LIAT has a good safety record, its little Twin Otters landing on some of the world's shortest and scariest airstrips. Its Airpass and Explorer deals allow you to do some extensive island-hopping at a reasonable price and connect you to some otherwise inaccessible destinations. Privatisation may turn LIAT into a streamlined, efficient operation. There again, the big new shareholder is none other than British West Indian Airways (BWIA), itself not famed for scrupulous punctuality. The omens are not promising.

James Ferguson

### Trouble spots

The week's advice from our man in the Foreign Office

Russia: the advice remains the same as it was before this week's killing of British businessman in a St Petersburg hotel. "Incidents of mugging, theft and pick-pocketing are increasing in all cities, especially St Petersburg and Moscow. Be vigilant and dress down. Be particularly wary in Moscow of groups of young vagrants."

Sri Lanka: "Fighting is continuing in the north and east. Do not visit these areas. The south and centre, including all the main tourist areas and the 'Cultural Triangle', remain largely unaffected. Further information may be obtained direct from the British High Commission in Colombo (tel 437336, fax 430308).

Yemen: "Armed theft of vehicles, particularly of four-wheel-drive models, is not uncommon. The risk of random kidnapping remains. In January 1996 a group of French tourists was held. As in other incidents the tourists were released unharmed after several days. There remains some danger from mines laid during the civil war in the southern and eastern governorates."

Ethiopia: "Visitors should confine themselves to the recognised tourist areas including the Rift Valley lakes, Addis Ababa and the Highland tourist route. Avoid travel after dark and take accommodation only in the larger towns."

Foreign Office travel advice is available on 0171-270 4129, on BBC 2 (see page 564 onwards), and on the Internet at <http://www.fco.gov.uk/>

### Bargain of the week

Pricing a fly-drive holiday to America can be a slippery business; often the extras add up to more than the basic air fare. But Jetset (0990 555757) says its April special to California will cost precisely £319, plus \$15 (£10) payable locally for state tax. The deal is

based on two people travelling together. It provides Heathrow-Los Angeles flights on Air New Zealand between 11 and 29 April, and a week's car rental. The price includes including taxes, collision damage waiver, airport surcharges and unlimited mileage.

## The Wildest Dreams Travel Challenge

The biggest obstacle to independent travel is cost. So Heineken Export, in association with the Independent, is offering a travel bursary of up to £25,000.

### Who can enter?

Anyone aged 18-35.

### How to enter

Application forms will be assessed by a panel of experts. Forms are available from the special hotline number 0171-231 5432; the Lonely Planet Internet <http://www.lonelyplanet.com.au>; or at STA Travel shops.

### When to enter

By 26 April. Winners will be announced on 6 May. If you are planning to leave before then, we will be making interim awards.

### How much is the prize?

Awards are at the judges' discretion. One exceptional proposal (say a tour of the 177 countries where Heineken Export is available) could win the full amount...

## Last station: Gunnislake

Simon Calder travels on a coast-embracing branch line that, miraculously, has escaped the cuts

Devon and Cornwall have some glorious railways, such as the elegant, lazy arc carved around St Michael's Bay by the Penzance train, and the coast-embracing line from Teignmouth to Dawlish. But the real aficionado is travelling on one of the shorter, sturdier stretches.

There are two ways to travel to Cornwall by train, and the thousands of holiday-makers rumbling across Brunel's strident Royal Albert Bridge aboard InterCity 125s have chosen the lesser option. Seekers of scenery, railway history and solitude choose the Tamar Valley line.

Quite how this 14-mile zig-zag of track has survived round after round of railway cutbacks is hard to explain. On the day last week when I travelled on it, we passengers played out a 2-2 draw with the crew. Even at the frightful cost of 27 pence a mile I was paying, it is hard to see how Regional Railways can keep the line going.

Yet six days a week (and on summer Sundays), a two-coach train sets off from Plymouth to explore the river valley that

divides Devon from Cornwall. You plod through the sorry cityscapes punctuated by pauses at Dockyard and Devonport, through stations whose antiquated names are sometimes longer than the platform needed for these two-coach shuttles: St Budeaux Victoria Road takes its place with Lymington Commando among the more ambitiously named Devonian stations.

Your train diverts from the line leading across the Tamar here, and immediately the tone changes. The austere suburbs give way to grand views across to Cornwall - a collage of steeply wooded slopes sliding into sharp, black water.

In its promotional material, the railway company erroneously describes it as "One of England's loveliest branch lines". Yet only the last short segment was originally a branch. The stretch as far as Bere Alston, a truly heroic link between Plymouth and London, was built by the London & South Western Railway. Bere Alston was Devon's own Clapham Junction, where the Gunnislake branch darted off from the im-

portant main line. "Up trains" to London wheezed uphill towards Tavistock and skirted around the northern fringe of Dartmoor to reach the capital. Now the sole purpose of the station is as a reversing point, from which the train sets off to cross the Tamar into Cornwall.

Calstock could be the epicentre of the heritage industry, its sturdy cottages simpering prettily beneath the arm of a mathematically exact viaduct across the river. That the first village in Cornwall manages to elude the twee in favour of the New-Newtonian perfection of the viaduct is evident to everyone except passengers. Your £3.80 ticket entitles you to get off, look around and wait two hours for the next train.

The last two miles along the Gunnislake branch climbs several hundred feet into the Cornish hills. The train hauls itself into a station which is more municipal car park than great railway terminus. We passengers alight, leaving Regional Railways £7.60 better off - but us tourists much the richer.

## The Waterways of Russia

The opening of the waterways between St Petersburg and Moscow allows us to link visits to two great cities with a relaxing cruise that travels the Neva River, Lake Ladoga, the Svir River, Lake Onega, the Baltic Canal, White Lake, the Volga River and finally the Moscow and Volga Canals. This intricate system of waterways has a beauty that is hard to describe. Serene, peaceful and timeless with silver birch and pine forests, sandy shores, calm flowing water and spectacular late sunsets, in these realms of the 'White Nights', calls will be at such historic towns as Uglich, where the blue cupolas decorated with the golden stars of the riverside church make a stunning landmark.

For this journey we have selected the MS Karamzin which, although not as high a standard as our other vessel, the MY Kurov, offers very good facilities considering the competitive tariff. This 14-night tour will therefore appeal to those wishing to see unspoilt parts of Russia from an economical and comfortable base.

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truma. Day 7 Visit Yaroslavl. Day 8 Visit Irma. Day 9 Visit Goritsy. Day 10 Visit Kizhi Island. Day 11 Visit Svir Stroy. Day 12 Arrive St Petersburg. Afternoon visit to the Hermitage. Day 13 Morning excursion to Pushkin. Day 14 Day at leisure. Day 15 Fly from St Petersburg to Gatwick.

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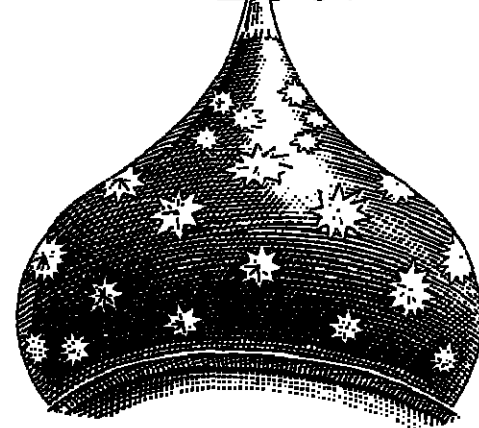
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# And the walls came crumbling down

When oil fever came to a small Lancashire community hope sprang eternal. Then the vibrations started. By Jim White

One day in April 1987 Alyson Guest was sitting on the lavatory in of the flat she was renting at one end of a creaking old stone farmhouse in the middle of the Lancashire moor country. Suddenly, and for no apparent reason, she was thrown from the seat by severe wobbling coming from within the porcelain. Leaping up and standing astonished on the other side of the room, Ms Guest noticed that the lavatory, which was bolted directly into the ground, vibrated for some time as if directly wired to a small nuclear power station.

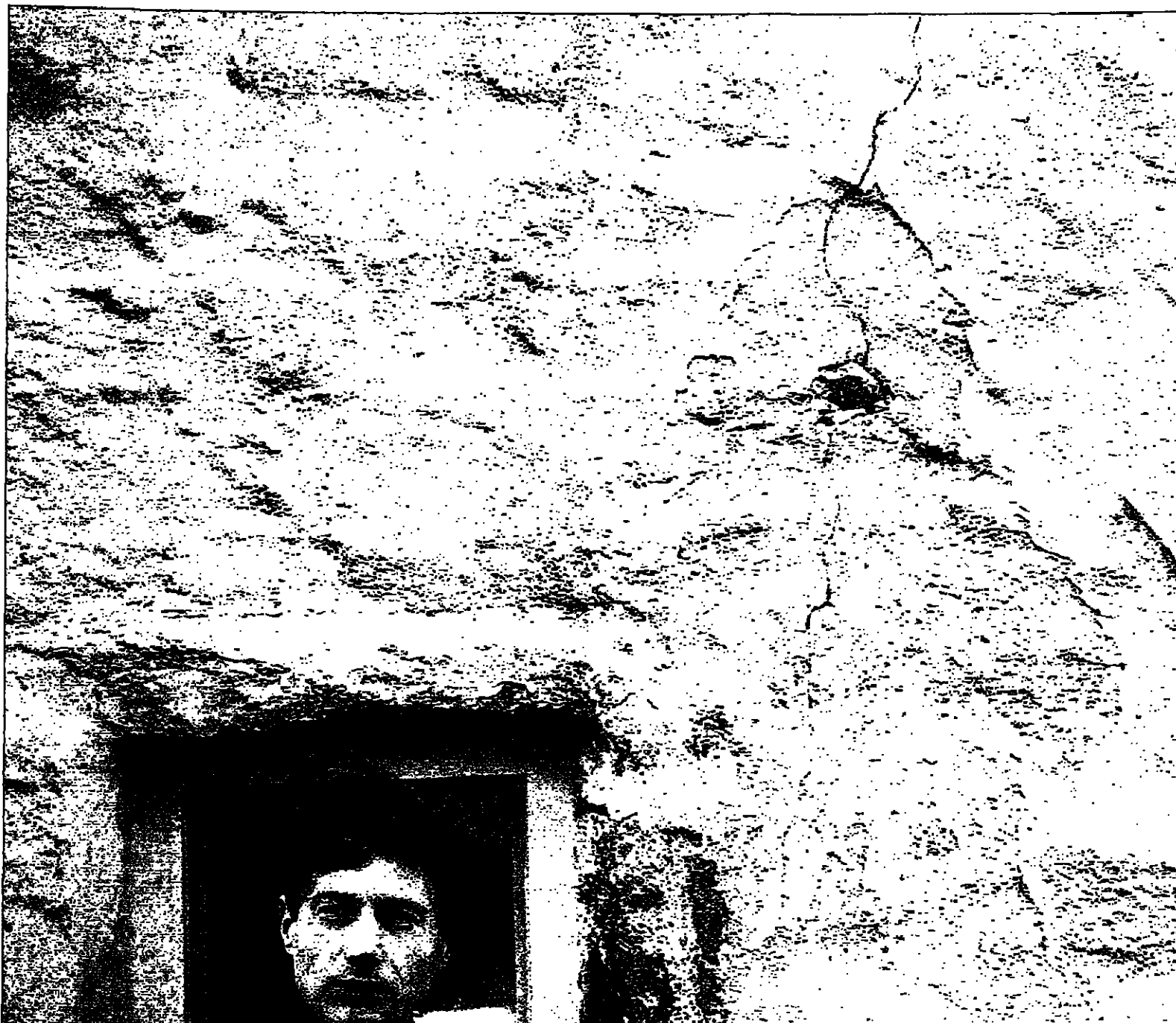
"The vibrations were so severe it was quite impossible to continue," she said, of the task in hand.

Recovering from her shock, and alerted by a rumbling noise outside, Ms Guest ran out into the lane which runs along the front of the house in time to see three trucks slowly wending their way towards the village of Slaidburn. She noted the name on the back of one of the lorries and returned to her business.

The following weekend, Christopher Wenner, a member of the family who owns the house and uses one wing for holidays, came to stay. He noticed, as he turned his car into the yard behind the house that the dry-stone walls which flanked the lane on either side of the building had collapsed. Worse was to follow, opening the front door he was immediately struck by extensive wave-like cracking in previously sound walls and ceilings. There was more severe damage, too: big cracks running up the back of the house, which passed straight through the lintel stones under a couple of windows. One internal split was sufficiently expansive for the water pipes running behind the plaster to be exposed. Wenner was astonished at the damage, which looked as if the whole house had been picked up and shaken. He immediately asked Alyson Guest if anything unusual had happened around the place recently. Well, she said, there was the time she was thrown off the lavatory by these uncountable vibrations. And then there were the lorries.

Laytham's Farm is over 350 years old, a house built without foundations in the same way as dry-stone walls, with a fine in-fill and plaster on the exterior. In several places the outside walls are bolted together with metal strapping. It is not, as any casual observer might take note, the strongest of constructions.

Nevertheless it commands a magnificent view over the Forest of Bowland to one side and the Hodder Valley to the other. Looking across the fells on a February morning, with the wind whipping the trees as if bent on a mission of revenge, you might think there is not a lot out there on the bleak, battered fells that anyone would be interested in. But in April 1987, Enterprise Oil, the great success com-



Martin Wenner and one of the cracks in his cottage caused by seismic sounding

Photograph: Joe Houlihan/Gazelle

pany of the Eighties (which in 1990 was named as paying its staff more than anyone else in Britain) were very interested in the place. They thought they sniffed oil.

Unlike in the title sequence of the TV series *The Beverly Hills Billies*, when Jed Clampett goes out shooting at some food, and up from the ground comes a bubbling crude, if there was oil round Bowland way it was well out of gunshot range. So Enterprise contracted a firm called Simon Horizon, who had in their possession several Vibroseis wagons. A German machine with an enormous circular pad like a giant dustbin lid strapped to its undercarriage, the lorry moves into position,

then winches itself up off its wheels allowing all its three tons to press down on the pad. The pad then vibrates vigorously, enabling sound waves to pass through the ground to a depth of three kilometres and to a radius of four. The name on the truck Alyson Guest had spotted was Simon Horizon.

It didn't take Chris Wenner long to put together a theory as to why his house suddenly resembled a lump of Stilton. Local gossip in Slaidburn was full of oil talk, the seismic soundings and how everyone would benefit when the place was full of free-spending Texans.

Wenner thought he ought to contact Enterprise and see what they had to

say. So, soon after the incident, a helpful and attentive employee of the company, called Mr Aspinall, arrived at Laytham's. He took a look round, noted the splits in the pavement outside, the way the roof of the outhouse was coming away from its walls, and all the interior and exterior damage to the house and satisfied himself that the Wenners were not trying to pull a fast one. Seismic sounding can cause damage to dry stone walls, he revealed, indeed the company had contracted a full-time waller to make good any vibration damage throughout the area (hence the manner in which the Wenner's field walls were quickly repaired). Besides, he added, the sub-contractors

were given guidelines, don't vibrate within 100 metres of vulnerable buildings; and the schedule of work he showed Wenner revealed that a testing had been done on the lane right outside Laytham's, the front wall of which is only two metres from the tarmac. An open and shut case, Wenner thought.

Nearly nine years later, Martin Wenner - Christopher's brother - stands in the kitchen of Laytham's with a briefcase full of documentation.

"Our costs so far," he says, waving about a wad of papers, many of them tied with legal red ribbon, "have touched £30,000. And still there is no sign of a settlement."

When you engage with a large corporation over a matter of compensation, they will more easily stand the legal costs of a long-running case than you can.

"After Mr Aspinall had been we thought that was it," says Martin. "And then he rang to say, sorry, there was nothing he could do. The matter was being taken out of his hands and put with the legal department. If we wanted compensation, we'd have to sue." And then the costs began to tick up like a taxi fare in a traffic jam: £750 for an architect's report, £3,500 for a structural surveyor's report, £10,000 for a top-notch solicitor and £5,500 for an engineering survey of the house. The survey found that "it is reasonable to conclude that the seismic survey caused damage to stone structures in the area."

"And we've had to spend money on repairing as much as we can, otherwise the house would have collapsed - although we have been forced to leave some of the damage unattended, as evidence," says Martin, standing by a crack he had just discovered hiding behind a radiator, through which a stiff breeze whistles.

There have been farcical moments in the Wenner's nine year *Bleak House* experience of suit and brief, such as the time the sub-contractors sought to have the case struck off on the grounds that it had not been filed within the statutory limitation period.

"It had," says Martin. "But of course a judge had to hear their case, then throw it out which inevitably caused yet more delay. We're still waiting for a date when a judgement can be reached. And the longer we wait, the more it will cost us."

Meanwhile, by a bizarre coincidence, Martin, who is an actor, landed a part in the television series *Roughnecks*, playing an oil company explorations executive. As a piece of extended method-acting research, this was in the De Niro class.

"I certainly knew what I was talking about," he says. "And then we had to film out on an oil platform which turned out to be owned by, yes you've guessed it, Enterprise Oil. I feel they have invaded every aspect of my life."

When we contacted Enterprise about the affair, their helpful spokesman said that while the company accepted liability for the damage caused to the Wenner property during the exploration in the Hodder Valley, court proceedings were required to settle the amount of compensation due (though there has never been a written admission of liability). And as yet there was no date for such proceedings.

"If they are saying that," says Martin, in the resigned tone of one who knows the answer, "Why on earth couldn't the thing have been settled nine years ago when it would have cost about a tenth of what it will cost now?" Incidentally, during the survey of the Hodder Valley, no oil was found.

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## money

The 'tax-free' tag is a powerful marketing tool for PEPs, even if for most investors the actual gains from putting their equity investments in a PEP is limited.

Nobody who opens a newspaper these days can doubt that this is the time of year for personal equity plans, or PEPs. With the end of the tax year barely a month away, the marketing effort by providers of PEPs is at its customary annual peak.

As a nation, it seems, most of us are unable to do anything with potential tax benefits until the last minute, and the suppliers of PEPs are naturally doing all they can to cash in on this most human of failings.

There is nothing much wrong with that. It is clear that PEPs have proved a worthwhile innovation since they were launched a few years ago. True, their global impact on savings patterns has been fairly marginal. The majority of people still prefer the security of building society savings schemes, such as Tessas, to the potential roller-coaster ride of UK and European stockmarkets. But they have done a good deal to increase public awareness of the value of pooled equity investment.

The "tax-free" tag is a powerful marketing tool, even if for most investors the actual gains from putting their equity investments in a PEP is limited. For a long time, high charges ate up most of the tax savings investors made on their dividend payments. The people who really benefit from PEPs are those who have capital gains tax liabilities to shield, and that is still not a large number.

Overall, in a buoyant equity market, the arrival of PEPs has made a sizeable splash, vacuuming up tens of billions of pounds since their launch in 1987. The scale of investment has also been boosted by concessions from a succession of Chancellors.

The growing competition to provide low cost no frills PEPs – for example, index-tracking funds – is one of the most encouraging developments. The problem facing most investors now is that the choice of Peps has become bewilderingly large.

The latest guide by Chase de Vere, for example, lists no fewer than 1,190 different Peps, and picking the right one is no easy task. This is caused by the determination on the part of fund managers to pull in as much money as they can. To do this, they launch funds that are – despite all their claims – almost identical to those of their rivals, multi-



## JONATHAN DAVIS INVESTMENTS

plying the confusion of choice. Increasing numbers of financial advisers are becoming concerned at the problem.

The charges are still more opaque than they should be. The new disclosure rules designed to make charges more transparent do not come into force until later this year. In any event, proposals by the regulator – the Personal Investment Authority – were judged to be so limp that they have been vetoed by the Office of Fair Trading.

Looking at a recent survey by consultants Watson Wyatt, it is interesting to see which names have done best in attracting funds in the different sectors. In the index-tracking sector, for example, where Fidelity has just joined the competition, Legal & General has attracted the most funds – £368m at the end of last year – its distribution network putting it ahead of Gartmore, Virgin, Midland and Morgan Grenfell.

Index tracking funds will, it seems certain, do very well over the next few years, and as this is essentially a commodity market, you will expect the bulk of the funds to go to firms that can provide the cheapest product, or have some other reason – such as the Virgin brand – for winning a customer following.

Trackers, are by definition supposed to follow the market, although of course individual companies will tell you that each of them does it in a way designed to ensure better investment returns. Even so, if you've seen one tracker, you've seen them all, or just about, which is why these funds compete on price.

Among the higher income PEPs, the biggest funds, in order, are M&G, Clerical Medical, Newton, Schroders, Perpetual and Allied Dunbar. It is hard to discern much of a pattern there, although it is interesting that they include at least three of the best specialist stock-picking fund

management groups (M&G, Newton and Perpetual).

In this sector there seems to have been little competition so far on price. Nearly all have relatively high initial charges and pay good commissions to intermediaries, but their performance has also been good, so presumably investors are mostly happy to pay the extra costs, or may be unaware of how much they are being charged.

The investment trust PEP table shows that, of the trusts which responded to the survey, the one that had attracted most funds is none of the better known names, but Alliance, the Dundee-based investment trust company which is the byword for Scottish parsimony.

This is a quality, in my opinion, which investors should rate more highly than they sometimes do. The two investment trusts Alliance runs have done well for their shareholders for many years – nothing flashy, but solid, consistent performance at or above the market average – and rightly have a loyal following.

Investment trust PEPs generally are cheaper than their unit trust equivalents, but have long suffered from a lower profile in marketing. Apart from Alliance, other substantial investment trust PEP funds are those run by Schroders, Murray Johnstone and Dumedia (which is in the process of being taken over by Edinburgh Fund Managers).

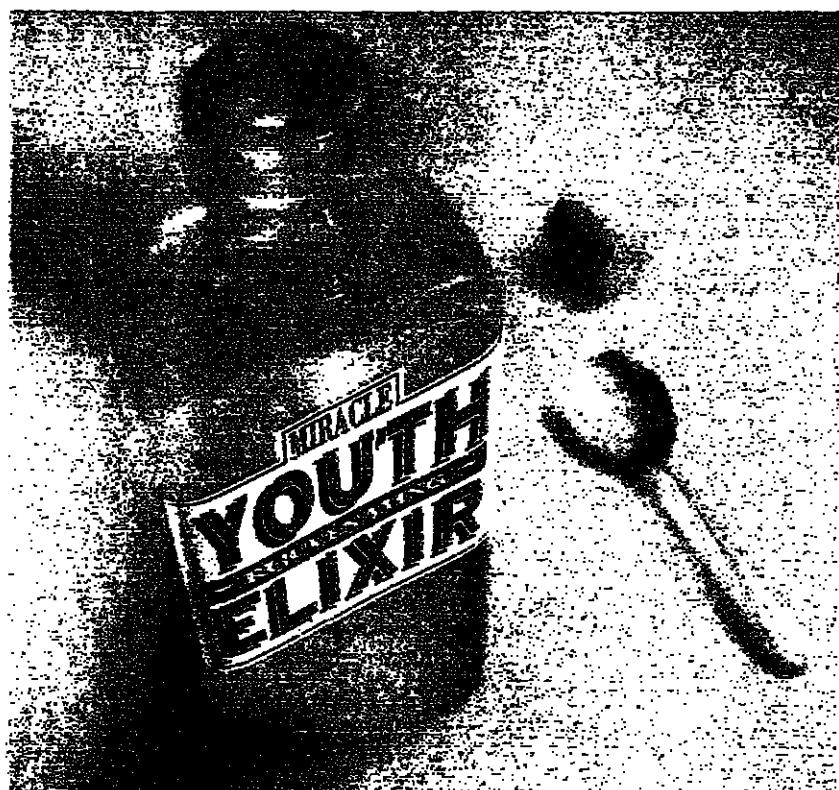
Overall, the lists of successful PEP providers prompts two thoughts. One is that the market is still quite highly differentiated, with each sector having its own market leaders.

The second is that, while PEPs generally are much better value than they were, there is still massive scope for costs to fall. What it needs is for customers to start flexing their muscles and to demand greater information and cost competitiveness from providers.

May independent financial advisers do a good job in assessing the relative performance of different fund providers. Some have access to professional specialist fund rating services that provide detailed information on all the different PEPs and their managers. But what we still lack in this country is a similarly specialist service for the retail market which can be bought directly by members of the public at a suitable price.

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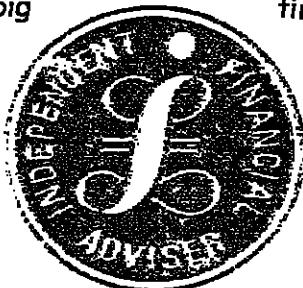
telling, but with more of the British population living to a greater age, there is going to be a big demand on the State's welfare services, and fewer working taxpayers to pay for it.

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# Why do so few people seem to have come across self-invested personal pensions?

**MICHAEL ROYDE**



A day in the life of a financial adviser

have had a number of clients in to see me over the last few months, who have had to sort out their pension arrangements. I find it quite surprising that so few people have come across self-invested personal pensions (or SIPP's).

These are like normal personal pensions, but the investments may be chosen on an individual basis rather than relying on the funds of any one insurance company.

This allows the financial adviser to pick investment managers who have consistently outperformed the market in each specific area of the world. They also allow the option of investing in property that one may then use to run business activities or rent out. The first client had made a

medical discovery and wanted to exploit this new idea. He wanted to buy premises in the Chatham area of Kent, but was short of capital. He decided to transfer out of his NHS pension scheme and invest part of the funds in a commercial property from which he could run his business.

The remaining two-thirds were invested in a with-profit fund, which smooths investment returns in good times and bad, in order to provide a safe return for the future.

Because rents in the Chatham area vary considerably, he was able to charge himself a low rent at the start with the prospect of a substantial increase after a few years. Because the property price was low, the initial return for his pension, the

## Guaranteed bonds: potential gains

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S&P 500	88	144	201
Nikkei	73	120	168
Eurotrack 200	55	90	126

rent he paid, was 18 per cent.

The next client, Fiona, was in a similar position, but it was her husband, Henry, who ran his business from expensive rented accommodation and wished to reduce his rent.

We made use of Fiona's pension fund to purchase two industrial units for £40,000. Henry paid rent of £4,000 for one unit and managed to let the other for a similar sum. This gave Fiona a really good return for her pension fund,

excluding any potential capital growth, and at the same time reduced the rental cost to Henry's business by £4,000.

The next client, David, was able to retire at 50, but did not require the income, so he decided to defer payment and in order to do so made a transfer of his pension into a SIPP.

In this sort of situation I work closely with an actuary, Ian Walker, who renegotiated the value of the occupational scheme's transfer from

just over £100,000 to almost £200,000. David wanted stock market exposure but required a low risk. I recommended we should make use of guaranteed stock market bonds.

These are pension fund investments with a three-month option to discontinue. The level of risk may be chosen as either 0.1 or 2 per cent. The table (left) illustrates the potential gains for each level of risk in four different stock markets for the first three months of this year.

On a 1 per cent risk, say, if the Nikkei falls by 10 per cent during the quarter, the loss is restricted to 99 per cent of a £10,000 investment, so you only lose £100. If the market closed up 10 per cent, the value of the bond goes up 20 per cent to £12,000.

To round off the portfolio, we made use of the best performing UK smaller companies unit trusts, together with a Pacific Rim unit trust.

In addition, we used an emerging market fund which invests in other single-country investment trusts, especially when they are at a discount to net asset value. This is where the value of the underlying assets within the fund is greater than the value of the investment trust shares.

The fourth client, Norman, is a management consultant, aged 51, whose income is very variable. He had a large paid-up pension with a previous employer, which had been untouched for some six years. He wanted to pay off his mortgage and to be able to draw a variable

income from his annuity.

After a lot of argument with the insurer who ran his fund, we managed to transfer out of the occupational scheme to a personal pension on a self-invest basis, with an income withdrawal facility.

He took the maximum tax-free cash of £80,000, which he used to pay off his mortgage. The remaining funds of approximately £300,000 were invested in a mixture of funds.

This allowed Norman to decide whether to draw an annual pension income of between £9,000 and £27,000. When his consultancy income was good he could draw a small pension and when his consultancy income was low he could draw a larger pension. Michael Royde can be contacted on 0171 792 3700.

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Bristol & West BS	0800 100117	6.99 to 28/2/01	90	£275	—	To 28/2/02: 6 mths interest
Variable rates						
Scarborough BS	0800 580547	1.09 for 1 year	95	—	£150 cash rebate	1st 5 yrs: rebate reclaimed & 6.4% of sum repaid
Derbyshire BS	01332 841000	3.89 for 2 years	75	£125	Free val, fee refund, £250 remortgages	1st 4 yrs: indiv determined
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Northern Rock BS	0800 591500	1.19 to 1/5/97	90	—	Refund valuation fee	1st 6 yrs: 5% of sum repaid
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Unsecured				With insurance	Without insurance	
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Alliance & Leicester BS	0500 959595	Alliance	0.76	9.5	2.20	29.8
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Robert Fleming/S&P	0800 829024	MasterCard/Visa	—	1.00	14.60	£12
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	Telephone	Payment by direct debit	Payment by other methods			
		% pm	APR	% pm	APR	
John Lewis	Via store	—	—	1.39	18.00	
Marks and Spencer	01244 681681	1.87A	24.80	1.97A	26.30	
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APR: Annualised percentage rate. A: 1.53% (19.5% APR) for o/s bal over £1K. E: Available to comprehensive motor insurance policyholders aged over 22 years. H: Amount has waived after first year if 50%+ charged to card during previous year. All rates subject to change without notice.	LTV: Loan to value D: No interest free period G: Annual rate 5% above R Fleming base rate. M: Equivalent to base rate. MONEYFACTS 01892 500677 29 February 1996	NSI: Accident, sickness and unemployment
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## money

## A high-risk way to have fun

Invest in nightclubs with an African theme or a satirical magazine — and get tax relief. David Porter explains

Given the state of the housing market, who would dare risk investing in residential property development? Or take a stake in a new satirical magazine due to launch soon? Or buy shares in a company operating North African-themed nightclubs in southern England?

Projects like these are high risk. Not surprisingly, they offer the chance of spectacular returns if they succeed. Inevitably there is a chance they will fail. But in recent weeks investors have been invited to put cash into just such types of venture.

Taxpayers can shelter up to £100,000 in any tax year on investments qualifying for relief under the Enterprise Investment Scheme. Tax relief is at the lowest rate of tax (20 per cent), cutting the initial investment outlay to 80 per cent. Gains are tax-free if the taxpayer retains the investment for five years.

If the investment turns into a dud, losses can be set against a taxpayer's highest rate of tax. Claiming the initial tax relief is easy. The company issues tax form EIS3 to investors, who then send this to their tax office.

Tax coding is altered for PAYE taxpayers, while the self-employed, paying tax by instalments, will enjoy reduced payments. To qualify for the tax relief taxpayers must invest at least £500 in any one EIS approved company, although companies themselves may insist on a higher minimum investment.

While tax reliefs available make high risks more palatable, investors should look carefully at each prospect. Take projected profits with a pinch of salt.

There are several essential questions investors should ask themselves. Does the company and founder have a track record? Are the costs excessive in raising up to £1m allowed per company?

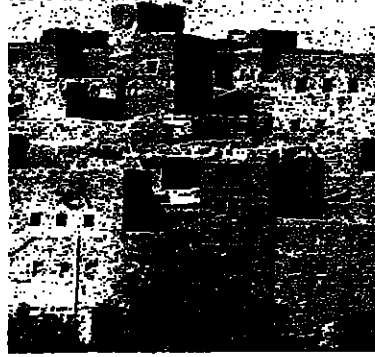
How does the investor cash in his or her investment?

Cadogan (0171 738 1961), a publisher of travel guides, is close to raising the £1m needed to buy rival David Campbell Publishers and provide working capital to expand.

DCT was founded in 1990 and made pre-interest and tax profits of £446,000 on sales of £3.7m last year. Cadogan generated profits last year of £70,000 on turnover of £1.1m.

Its EIS fund-raising will cost 7.25 per cent of the amount raised. Cadogan was initially funded through a Business Expansion Scheme, a forerunner to the EIS. Backers have seen more than a 30 per cent return on their initial investment in 1993.

The cost of the Cadogan issue compares favourably to Po Na Na, a group that operates North African-themed nightclubs. Raising £500,000 cost £70,000, although given the popular-



Coming soon to a nightclub near you: the atmosphere of Africa

ity of this issue it could have pulled in the £1m maximum permitted.

Proceeds were used to buy Po Na Na's London club, buy the management contract for Po Na Na in Oxford

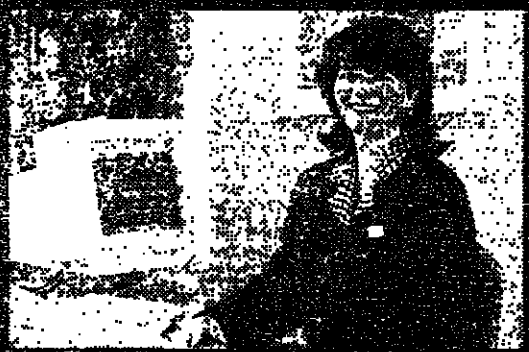
and refurbish its Cambridge premises. According to the prospectus, each club attempts to create the "warm and cosy surroundings of North African bazaars and market places."

Those who would like to be mini-media tycoons need look no further than *Insider* (0171 233 5914), a fortnightly satirical magazine launched by gossip journalist Tim Satchell.

He hopes to raise up to £240,000 at a cost of £16,400 for his publishing venture. Break-even equates to 20,000 sales per issue. It will publish on alternate weeks to *Private Eye*, the satirical magazine that sells an average of 192,000 copies.

More run of the mill are the numerous residential property schemes on offer. While investing in EIS companies can provide a lot of fun, never forget they are high risk prospects. At least with the tax advantages not all is lost when they go belly up.

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West Bromwich BS	0345 374121	Direct Instant	Postal	£25,000	6.25	Year
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# A fast car and a dream home. Big mistakes

The third in our series on bad investments. By Corinne Simcock

Quentin Bell, 51, is chairman of the Quentin Bell Organisation, the PR company he started as a one-man band in 1973. Today it employs 60 people, with clients including BT, Norwich Union and Fabergé Fragrances.

In the 1980s, when QBO was growing rapidly, I was looking for alternative investments," he says. "Rather than leave the rest of my money in the bank, I started investing in things I could either look at or use.

"I have always had a love of quality cars, and when Aston Martin announced the launch of its new Virage Volante in 1989 I decided to buy one. I put down a £20,000 deposit and was given a chassis number.

"This was the time when people were playing the futures market with cars. One of the first of these new Aston Martins to come off the production line was immediately sold at auction for £50,000 more than the owner had paid.

"The Inland Revenue expects cars to depreciate, so as long as you're not trading, profit is tax-free.

"I already had an Aston Martin Volante, and I had seen its value rocket to

£120,000, so I was pretty confident.

"But by 1991 the bottom had fallen out of the car market. The car would have been worth less than I had had to pay for it. I was faced with a dilemma - either I went ahead and paid up £150,000, or I lost my £20,000 deposit.

"Have you ever seen £20,000 in notes? If you've got it sitting on a table in front of you, you tend to think, 'I don't want to lose this'. But it was the lesser of two evils, so I just had to bite my lip.

"You have to remember that this was in the Thatcher years and it was a very buoyant time when supposedly nothing could go wrong. The recession took me by surprise because human beings don't expect change. Once you are on a roll - as we were in the 80s - you expect it to continue.

"Unfortunately, in 1989 I also bought a £60,000 holiday home in southern France. It was a beautiful farmhouse but it needed a lot of money spending on it.

"I bought it on a whim. I thought it would be a good alternative investment. I had also planned to use it as a holiday home. It took me a year to refurbish it, at a cost of

around £115,000. I was flying down every weekend to do what became affectionately known as *Le Pige*. It was an hilarious scene: the plumbers and the carpenters in their berets and boiler suits would queue up around my table while I wrote out endless cheques.

"Looking back, I simply hadn't thought it through. I broke my golden rule of being focused. Fabulous though the property is, I ended up with neither a holiday home nor an investment.

"When the weather is good, the place is being let. But that only accounts for eight to ten weeks a year. I really loved doing it up. You could argue that it was extremely therapeutic, but it was a very expensive

exercise because I wasted £175,000.

"Had I put it into the Stock Exchange, I would have doubled it by now instead of sitting on a dormant asset.

"The problem with alternative investments is that emotions come into play. You start to look at expensive tiles and sofas, or cars that are wonderful to drive. And that's where everything goes wrong. Generally speaking, it is dangerous to combine investments and emotions.

"Of course life isn't easy. If all investments were going to come right, then everybody would do it. You can't succeed every time. But if you're thinking of a holiday home as an investment, don't, because it isn't."



Quentin Bell: 'Workmen would queue up while I wrote endless cheques'

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## PROFILE: Benjamin Netanyahu

Israel's opposition leader has seen his political prospects improve this week, reports Patrick Cockburn

Benjamin Netanyahu, universally known as Bibi, is on his best behaviour. The suicide bombs that exploded in Jerusalem and Ashkelon last Sunday, killing 23 Israelis, have certainly saved Israel's opposition leader from humiliating defeat in the forthcoming elections and could make him Prime Minister in three months' time. In the days since the bombings, he has oozed moderation, urging restraint and promising not to exploit the tragedy for his own Likud party's advantage.

He does not have to. Shimon Peres, the Labour Prime Minister, is already badly wounded by the bombings. "Another three more attacks like this and Peres loses the elections," says one of the government's advisers. "There is no strategy that can counter exploding buses. Bibi appeals to Israelis in the way Pat Buchanan appeals to Americans. When the gut speaks, Bibi can smile."

Newt Gingrich, the speaker of the House, might be a better parallel. He and Mr Netanyahu share the same soundbite fluency. Both are sure in attack than defence and have been despised and underestimated by their numerous enemies as successful opportunists short on real policies. Mr Netanyahu has none of Buchanan's social populism but shares his ability to tap into the voters' anxieties. And there is no doubt what makes the Israeli voter anxious at the moment: he fears that the Oslo accords, agreement with the Palestinians, have made his life more dangerous rather than safer. Across Israel last week, parents were walking or driving their children to school rather than allowing them to take a bus. Suddenly, Mr Netanyahu's claim that he can deliver "peace with security" looked very attractive. He says it is possible to beat suicide bombers – though he does not disclose how – and, if elected, he would go on talking to the Palestinians, though he will refuse to meet Yasser Arafat.

These policies may be contradictory, but polls show that so are the views of the Israeli voter. But Mr Netanyahu has to be very cautious. He only just survived the moment last November when Leah Rabin nearly refused to shake his hand at her assassinated husband's funeral. "It's too late," she said to him, as she finally extended her arm. She meant that it was too late for him to express regrets for his part in creating a climate of violence in the months before Mr Rabin was murdered. Mr Netanyahu tried to brush off her remarks by saying she was distraught, but he was politically badly damaged.

His new caution was visible last week. A year ago, Mr Netanyahu would probably have visited the scorched wreckage of Bus 18, in which 23 Israelis died, and made some outspoken criticisms of the government. Instead, he stayed away and his comments were mild, saying suicide bombers did not distinguish between Likud and Labour voters. The election is not until 29 May and, as the emotional reaction to the bombs dies away, he does not want to be charged once again with irresponsibility. Paraded by his plunge in the polls, Labour is gearing up for an attack on Mr Netanyahu's character.

It has plenty of ammunition, though it has not proved very effective in the past. Labour



All things in moderation: since the bombings, Benjamin Netanyahu has urged restraint

Photograph: AP

## Can Bibi beat the suicide bombers?

will contrast Mr Netanyahu's youth – he is only 46 – and inexperience with that of Shimon Peres, 72, who was running the Israeli Defence Ministry when Mr Netanyahu was a baby. If elected, he will be the first Israeli leader not to have taken part in the 1948 war of independence. The son of a distinguished historian, who specialises in Jewish history in Spain in the Middle Ages, he is very much the creature of the Israel that developed after the 1967 war.

'He appeals in the way Pat Buchanan appeals to Americans. When the gut speaks, Bibi can smile'

Benjamin Netanyahu spent five years as a commando, but his family's reputation for military prowess stems from his brother, Jonathan, who died leading the Israeli raid to free prisoners on a hijacked plane at Entebbe in 1976. Bibi's political career took off in the Eighties, the Likud's years of success. His rise into the Israeli political elite took place in the US, where he took a degree in architecture and business administration and was then number two at the Israeli embassy in Washington.

In 1984, he became Israeli ambassador to the UN, a role in which he was in constant demand on US television. He speaks perfect English, in a rich, beguiling voice that is particularly

effective on television. Good-looking, with intense, darting eyes, he is also an effective platform performer, though he gives the impression that he has seldom had to face hard questioning. He is the author of several books, though they have a glib, propagandist quality and have done little for his reputation.

From the beginning of his political career, Mr Netanyahu has proved accident-prone but also apparently unsinkable. He appeared on

television to confess to being unfaithful to his third wife, Sarah. There was talk of a "hot video" circulating which proved Mr Netanyahu was having an affair.

In the campaign for the Likud leadership in 1993 – after the party's shock election defeat the previous year – he went on television to accuse "a gang of criminals" of trying to blackmail him over a sexual escapade. The implication was that David Levy, his opponent for the Likud leadership, was involved. Mr Netanyahu claimed he had clear proof, a charge that turned out to be wholly untrue and for which he apologised – but only after he had won the leadership contest.

He did nothing to stop David Levy leaving

Likud to form his own party, though this year he is prepared to pay a heavy price to woo him back. It is a measure of the hatred generated by Mr Netanyahu's vicious campaigning that for three years Mr Levy has refused to mention his name and cuts him dead if he sees him in the Knesset, the Israeli parliament.

Throughout this period, Mr Netanyahu was catching up with Mr Rabin in the polls. The suicide bomb attacks on targets in the heart of Israel in 1994 and 1995 made all Israelis feel vulnerable. Mr Netanyahu decided to bet heavily on the settlers of the West Bank and the extreme right, both totally opposed to the Oslo peace deal. He and his entourage mocked warnings that things might get out of hand, leaving him deeply vulnerable when Yigal Amir assassinated Mr Rabin on 4 November.

The suicide bombings in Jerusalem and Ashkelon mean that Mr Netanyahu can return to the policy that served him well for two years. His expression is likely to be more moderate. He now leaves it unclear if he opposes or accepts the Oslo accords. He says he "would not send back the tanks" into autonomous Palestinian areas, but implies that the government should cancel its withdrawal from Hebron. It may be difficult to maintain this ambiguity for three months, and Israeli voters could come to feel that if Mr Netanyahu wins, the likelihood is more suicide bombs rather than less.

## Why we must be stewards of our soil

Managing this neglected resource is vital to our future, says John Houghton

Soil, air and water are the three essentials for life on land. But environmental policies have often taken soil for granted. Soil is of vital importance because we use it to produce our food. It is also an integral part of the landscapes and habitats we value so highly in the countryside.

In our report *Sustainable Use of Soil*, published this week, the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution set out to establish whether the effects would be sustainable if current human activities that affect soils, and present trends, continued unchanged for the next 100 years.

Sustainability in the use of soils does not mean avoiding all changes, or trying to restore damaged soils to some pristine state. But it implies that human activities ought not to deplete resources of soil at a faster rate than these can be replenished by natural processes or human intervention. We must be careful not to cause lasting damage to the natural resilience of soils, about which we have little understanding.

At global levels there are extensive areas degraded by over-exploitation and mismanagement. Within the next 20 years the world will probably begin to run out of land that can be brought into agricultural use. It will also be increasingly difficult to meet the rising demands for water. Feeding the world's growing population may be made considerably harder by climate change.

The UK has fertile soils and there is no widespread damage of the kind apparent in many other countries. The UK might have to become more self-sufficient in food in the 21st century – we might even become a net exporter of food. That makes our own resources of soil even more precious.

The Royal Commission believes that there ought to be an explicit policy to protect soil. Our central recommendation is that the Government should draw up and implement such a policy. The aim will be to ensure that the use made of soils for all purposes is the optimal sustainable use.

The pressure on UK soils comes not only from agriculture, but extraction of peat and other minerals, from con-

tamination caused by industrial operations, from various forms of waste disposal, from atmospheric pollution and, last but not least, from urbanisation. The continuing transfer of substantial amounts of rural land to urban uses, especially in fertile lowland areas and areas of high aesthetic value, is a major threat to the sustainable use of soil resources. Already, built-up areas and roads cover one-eighth of England. If such growth were to continue at what was the average annual rate between 1945 and 1990, more than a fifth of England would be covered by built-up areas and roads by the end of the next century.

The solution must lie in recycling previously developed land for new uses. This depends on removing any contamination that would be an obstacle to re-use. At the present rate of remediation however it could take 100 years to remediate soil on the contaminated sites that now exist. We need to find ways of harnessing marketing forces to help achieve more effective recycling based on the best practicable environmental protection. But this will not be achieved by market forces alone, and we recommend a more pro-active approach by government agencies.

Wise stewardship of soils is almost always in the direct interests of farmers. But government departments must do more to ensure that they have adequate advice about soil conservation. A welcome development is integrated farming systems that optimise inputs of pesticides and fertilisers, and employ techniques such as crop rotation and natural pest and disease control.

The new Environmental Agencies have a very important role in making up for the previous neglect of soils. Their new functions in relation to contaminated land should be brought into effect as soon as possible. The other legislation applying to them should be reviewed within three years to ensure that they seek the best practicable environmental option in all their activities.

Sir John Houghton is Chairman of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution

## Singers who bring the House down

Two more stars have left Covent Garden in the lurch. But they have good reason, says Peter Popham

Following its six-week display of dirty laundry courtesy of the BBC's documentary cameras, the Royal Opera House had another embarrassment on its hands this week when the sensational Welsh bass-baritone Bryn Terfel withdrew from its forthcoming production of Strauss's *Arabella*, which opens on 27 March. This in itself might have been supportable had it not come hard upon the announcement three weeks ago that the show's other star, Amanda Roocroft, was also pulling out.

It was inevitably being described as a "double whammy" for the House. The casting had filled opera-lovers with delicious anticipation. In Strauss's opera, the eponymous Arabella, daughter of a dissolute count, and the dashing Croatian landlord Mandryka, who falls in love with her, are both young parts; the emotions that wrack them are callow, barely post-pubescent. But Strauss's score is of such difficulty that the roles are normally tackled by singers well into middle age. In Terfel and Roocroft, the ROH had succeeded in capturing two singers with soaring reputations and voices big enough for the challenge, who were also just about young enough – they are both 30 – to sing the Mills-and-Bon-oh libretto with a degree of plausibility. It was also going to be the first time they had sung together, a "dream-team debut".

Now Covent Garden has lost them both. And it comes in the wake of the painfully public let-downs the House had to put up with during the documentary series *Deuce Craves* pulling out of *Carner* after one performance with a sore throat, and Jeffrey Black in *Figaro* having to be replaced at the last minute by a singer, Thomas Allen, who had never even clapped eyes on the set or conductor before he went on stage. To the outsider it looks like carelessness or worse – a bad habit. The House keeps on giving these youngsters their big breaks; for its pains, it keeps getting its face slapped. Most astonishingly of all to the non-opera-going lay per-



Perfectionist: Welsh bass-baritone Bryn Terfel (right) decided to withdraw

Photograph: Laurie Lewis

son, there seems to be no comeback, no show-down in court. The House smiles sweetly and turns the other cheek. "They've been absolutely wonderful about it," trilled Doreen O'Neill, Terfel's agent, yesterday.

Why can opera singers get away with the sort of apparent caprice that in other industries, in today's grim business climate, would lead without much delay to termination of the relationship?

The essential reason is because in most cases it is not caprice. Pavarotti is notorious for cancelling performances at short notice but nobody has given him his cards. Correction – Ardis Kravitz, director of the Chicago Lyric Opera, did just that in 1989, sack-

ing him publicly and in perpetuity for reneging on 24 out of 41 scheduled performances. But that was one particularly iron-willed American. There are few others in the opera world with that sort of style.

Terfel has gone down so sensationally in America that he has been lumbered with the awful nickname "Taffy-rotti". But he has yet to develop an ego to match the nickname, and neither he nor Roocroft has a reputation for leaving opera houses in the lurch. Terfel's work schedule, however, helps to explain why opera fans around the world are increasingly being disappointed by their favourite stars.

Terfel made his debut at the Salzburg Festival in 1992, and, after

singing at New York's Metropolitan Opera House two years later, his career took off like a rocket – he is now booked solid through 1999 and his agent is taking reservations for well into the next century.

It is natural that the world's opera houses should want to get their claws into the up-and-coming stars good and early; but it is equally natural, nay inevitable, that Bryn Terfel cannot be sure what his circumstances will be two, three, four or seven years hence. Terfel is currently singing the role of Nick Shadow in Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* with the Welsh National Opera. His agent explains that "He didn't realise until he sang it on stage what a demanding role it was going to

be. He's learnt all the part of Mansryka [in *Arabella*], but he felt that he wouldn't do full justice to it, and as he's a perfectionist, rather than give it 90 per cent, he decided to withdraw."

Amanda Roocroft's excuse is even better. Two years ago, when she signed up for *Arabella*, she couldn't have known that four months before it was to open she was going to have a baby; nor that, following the birth, she would have such a struggle to rebuild her strength. "It's not because she wanted to be indulged as a new mother," the press office at Covent Garden insists, "but she needs more time to build up her stamina."

The scathing reviews that followed her Wigmore Hall recital last month (after she had already announced that she was pulling out of *Arabella*) will have convinced her she made the right decision.

Covent Garden, like other opera houses in similar situations, is left to scabble around for last-minute substitutes, paying top dollar for names (such as the American soprano Cheryl Studer, who replaces Roocroft) that will keep the box office busy. But the Royal Opera is not too desperately in need of our sympathy. For all the moaning about unfairness that preceded the showing of *The House*, the documentary series has done Covent Garden enormous good in terms of public interest: requests to join the mailing list have poured in, and ticket sales are up.

Whatever the backstage controversies the programme exposed, it also revealed the true glamour and excitement of an opera house's work, which has nothing to do with tedious arguments about elitism.

Now the dramatic comings and goings of famous principals help to keep that memory fresh. And when the action on stage is as clunky and contrived as that provided by Strauss's *Arabella*, a few off-stage fixations can only help to keep the place alive.

## TEST DRIVE YOUR BRAIN



WALK | | NEXT  
ZERO | | CALF  
EVEN | | ADDS  
KNIT | | INTO  
CLAD | | FLEE  
KERB | | YELP  
GERM | | ROAD

On each line place a letter in the space which, when substituted for the first letter of the word either side, will form another word in each case. The seven letters used will give another word reading downwards. What is it?

'Get the answer right and we will send you a Mensa Challenge Certificate'

The answer is ————  
If you can solve this puzzle you could be eligible to join Mensa the high IQ society.  
Cut the coupon for further details and a copy of the self-administered test.  
Post to: Mensa, FREEPOST, Wolverhampton, WV2 1BR

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# obituaries/gazette

## Pierre Verger

Pierre Verger first made his name as one of the co-founders of Alliance Photo, an agency of independent photographers in France during the early 1930s. It included such famous names as Henri Cartier-Bresson, André Kertész, Man Ray, Pierre Boucher and Robert Capa. From then on, for the rest of his life, Verger worked primarily as a freelance photo-journalist addicted to travelling.

Pierre Boucher introduced him to the art of photography. In 1932. At the same time he also experienced what might now be called a slightly early "mid-life crisis". Finding the idea of ageing degrading and useless, he decided to leave this world when he reached 40. This left him 10 years, every one of which was to be lived fully and with no compromises either with money or social ambition.

He decided to give up the parochial life of Paris and his rather boring work in the family printing firm and to travel the world, with little baggage and a trusty Rolleiflex camera. For the next 50 years he took some 65,000 photos for a large variety of publishers. He has over 60 other publications to his name, and in 1982 published *Fifty Years of Photography*, a photographic autobiography.

In 1934 he met George Henri Riviere, then Assistant Director of the Musée de

l'Homme, who was about to set up an ethnographic exhibition on the South Sea Islands. As Verger had just returned from there, Riviere was able to use many of his photographs. A lifelong friendship developed, and as Verger became more ethnographer than photo-journalist so his association with the Musée grew until well into the 1980s.

A chance contact in 1934 with the *Daily Mirror* earned him enough money to visit black Africa. He journeyed across the Sahara to Togo, where he developed a deep contact with the Yoruba people. The *Mirror* evidently liked his work and offered him a lucrative contract for the exclusive rights; but Verger refused, in spite of a precarious financial situation, because he could not bear to give up his freedom.

The following year he was asked by Paul Hartman, a well-known French publisher, to illustrate a book on Spain. He had recently completed a photographic tour of Andalusia which suited Hartman admirably. In 1937 his pictures were included in the book *South Sea Islands*. The same year he covered the Sino-Japanese war for *Ce Soir*, photographing the siege of Shanghai and the evacuation of the Chinese; he also recorded an interview with General Chiang Kai-shek.

In 1938, still worried by the idea of dying at 40, he calculated that he had only 1,500 more days to live. He bought a tape measure 1.5m long and resolved to cut off 1mm per day as a constant reminder of his mortality, and to give him the necessary boost to "get on" with his life and interests.

In Mexico when the Second World War was declared, he travelled the following year to Dakar and was drafted into a photographic unit of the French army. Dakar provided him with two important future contacts: his old friend Bernard Maupouil,

who happened to be an expert on Yoruba Divination Systems, and Théodore Monod, then Director of the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire (Ifan).

Demobilised, in 1941 Verger went to South America, where he worked for *Argentine Libre* and the review *El Mundo Argentino*. Moving to Porto Alegre following year, he spent 1942-46 as photographer at the National Museum, Lima. When the last millimetre was left on his "life" tape he read Lin Yu Tang's *The Importance of Living*, which changed his mind about continuing to live.

The urge to travel and "move on" remained. At Bahia in Brazil, Verger felt a close affinity with the Yoruba/African population's culture. He was encouraged by Professor Roger Bastide of Sao Paulo University to pursue the ethnology of black Africa in the Old and New World.

In 1948, in Bahia, Verger met Dona Senhora, a senior priestess of the Yoruba Oshun cult. She saw him as the "Go-Between", a messenger between the religions of the old and new world. He was subsequently inducted into the Yoruba cult of Sango, the Thunder God. His interest in the religious life of the Yoruba grew into a passion which was to illuminate his entire life.

In Kailash, Dahomey (now Benin), in 1952, Verger was fully initiated into the Yoruba religion and given the name "Fatumbi". He also became a "Babalawo" ("father of secrets"), a senior official's rank of the Ifa divination cult. This gave him a unique insight into the society he loved – and a tremendous responsibility not to reveal the priest's rites. On a recent visit to the School for Oriental and African Studies at London University, he told the students: "If you want to become anthropologists, don't ever ask questions – just sit down and listen."



Fishermen at Belem, Brazil: a 1947 photograph by Verger. From J.L. Pivin, *The Go-Between*, 1993

The academic world was beginning to take an interest in his work – Ifan gave him scholarships, demanding some form of publication in return, and he received a doctorate for his thesis on the slave trade; in 1975 the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris (CNRS) offered him a directorship. Despite these honours he still referred to his academic colleagues as "colourless parrots".

My first work with Pierre Verger was in 1968 when he asked me to help design the dis-

plays for a museum of the slave trade in Porto Novo, Dahomey. Our long friendship was recently reinforced with the publication of his last major work, a 762-page volume on the use of plants in Yoruba society, entitled *Ewe* ("leaves" in Yoruba), whose texts were collected over 40 years. It is illustrated by his lifelong friend Carybé, and I designed a typeface for the Yoruba language. Verger's brother priests in Bahia told him that he "could not die – the gods would not let him" until it was completed, which it was in November 1995. It has been prepared in Yoruba, Portuguese, English and French versions.

The Pierre Verger Foundation at Bahia in Brazil was inaugurated in March 1988 to create a study centre for all material – texts, recordings and photographs – related to the interconnected cultures of West Africa and Brazil.

Doig Simmonds

Pierre (Fatumbi) Verger, photographer and anthropologist, born Paris 4 November 1902; died Bahia, Brazil 11 February 1996.

He was a member of the Fawcett Society for 20 years. Parris was a gentle, shy and retiring man, who loathed war. He was rejected by the War Office Selection Board because he "totally lacked aggression". His distinction would have been more widely recognised had he not been so very different.

Stephen Cotgrove

Henry Walter Parris, historian, born Reading 20 November 1923; Research Fellow, Manchester University 1959-61; Lecturer in History, Sheffield University 1961-63; Lecturer in Politics, Durham University

1963-69; Director of Studies in Public Administration, Civil Service College 1970-76; Visiting Professor, Department of Government, London School of Economics 1988-94; FRHS 1973; married 1949 Judith Studd (two sons, two daughters, and one son deceased); died Bury, St Edmunds 31 January 1996.

He was also jointly responsible, with Jean-Jacques Gautier, for establishing the prestigious Association for the Prevention of Torture.

Owner and breeder of horses such as Greenheart, Ard Coal, Fergie Foster, The Wilk, and Irish Gent.

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Gordon Emmanuelle Cherry, town planning historian, born Barnsley 6 February 1931; Research Officer, Newcastle-upon-Tyne City Planning Department 1963-68; Professor of Urban and Regional Studies, Birmingham University 1976-91 (Emeritus), Dean, Faculty of Commerce and Social Science 1981-86; Head, School of Geography 1987-91; Public Order 1987-91; Fellow, Institute for Advanced Research in the Humanities 1991-96; President, Royal Town Planning Institute 1978-79; married 1957 Margaret Cox (one son, two daughters); died Hampton-in-Arden, West Midlands 11 January 1996.

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## Foreign Exchange Rates

[illegible][illegible]



## market report/shares

THE INDEPENDENT • SATURDAY 2 MARCH 1991

## DATA BANK

FT-SE 100

3752.7+25.1

FT-SE 250

4236.4+21.4

FT-SE 350

1876.0+11.9

SEAQ VOLUME

803.2m shares,

33,535 bargains

Gilts Index

93.56 +0.51

## SHARE SPOTLIGHT

share price, pence

Yorkshire Electricity

A S O N D J F

Share price, pence

Yorkshire Electricity

Share price, pence

Yorkshire Electricity

Share price, pence

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Share price, pence

Yorkshire Electricity

## Rumours of imminent interest rate cut spur shares

## TAKING STOCK

## MARKET REPORT

## DEREK PAIN

Stock market reporter of the year



Hopes of an interest rate cut next week spurred shares with many second liners stretching to new peaks.

At one time the FT-SE 100 blue chip index was up 36 points as Government stocks and half points. But by the close, Footsie's advance had been trimmed to 25.1.

The supporting index, measuring the next 250 shares, was in an even more confident mood. It closed 21.4 points higher at a record 4,236.4.

The next Ken and Eddie meeting is due on Thursday and the stock market is convinced the Chancellor and Governor will sanction an interest rate reduction.

The atmosphere was sufficiently strong for some large lines of stock to be cleared, although a five-million parcel of Allied Domecq continued to hover, lowering the shares to 511p.

Yorkshire Electricity was a star performer. The shares surged 39.5p to 793.5p as speculation resurfaced of a US takeover. Evidence of US buying has become apparent and Yorkshire seems to be the signalled target.

But stories of a Yorkshire strike have often sent the shares sizzling. At one time or another the group has been linked with a variety of possible predators.

Other electricity to catch the takeover current included East Midlands, up 9p to 732p; London 23p to 759p and Midlands 8p to 403p.

Waters also rose with Cazenove, the stockbroker, said to be keen on the sector. Thames improved 7p to 539p.

United Utilities, embracing electricity and water, was the best performing blue chip, gaining 19p to 599p.

British Aerospace was another flying high. Further con-

sideration of its results pushed the shares 21p up to 891p after 903p. Its performance inspired Avvis, the defence group, to a 12p advance to 157p, a peak.

The Whitehall decision to refer the Lloyds Chemists take over to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission lowered the shares 24p to 455p.

Unilever, one of the frustrated bidders, slipped 3p to 243p.

MFI, the flatpack furniture group, had the distinction of producing a trading statement which did not provoke a share fall. Its tale of higher sales and lower margins lifted the shares up to 158p.

Pearson added 12p to 694p

on Merrill Lynch support and Pilkington improved 5p to 214p on the back of Société Générale Strauss Turnbull.

Trafalgar House had a fretful session as worries multiplied over a much tougher bargain than had been expected.

Suggestion it was unhappy with what it was finding at Tris lowered the shares 2.5p to 44.75p in busy trading. The convertibles, up to 75p beforehand, ended at 69.5p.

The interest rate speculation helped retailers and builders with Redrow climbing 17p to 149p. The shares were floated at 135p two years ago.

Cray Electronics firmed 2p

to 47p on revived takeover talk but Memory Corporation, the computer chip repairer, unsettled its followers with an increased loss which seemed to kill hopes of profits this year.

The shares firmed 10p to 225p. Viewline surged 35p to 305p in a market desperately short of stock. Calls for more information from the company seemed harsh. It produced a prospectus when it floated in December at 100p. Only 3 million shares have been issued.

Biotech International, the healthcare group, continued its remarkable run, gaining 8p to 72p. It has signed a European marketing agreement with a German group.

The British Petroleum/Mobil deal left Frost, the petrol retailer, 6p lower at 121p. BP gained a further 5.5p to 545p.

Navan Resources, with extensive mineral interests in

Eastern Europe, jumped 13p to 187p on talk of a significant deal over one of its mines. Some suggested a takeover bid at 250p.

English National Investment Co, which has been revamped, gained 5p to 59p, a peak. The company is controlled by Joseph Lewis, the Bahamas investor who has built a near 30 per cent interest in Christie's International, the auctioneer, and has also moved in on Union, the financial group. There are suggestions it could become his main UK investment vehicle.

Another Lewis interest Harmony, the property group, held at 4p. There is talk of a merger with Olives Property. Mr Lewis has around 10 per cent of Harmony.

Spargo Consulting, the computer group, gave up 9p to 189p. Profits fell £308,000 to £302,000. Up to £1.7m is likely this year.

Bluebird Toys' record breaking run could come to an end when it reports year's figures next week. Some are hoping for more than £20m but indications are profits will come in just below £18m against £19.7m last time.

The toy group, with some £80m in the bank, could launch a share buyback following the results; it already has permission. Bluebird, where takeover hopes linger, fell 2p to 318p.

Specialises, the optical retailer, gained 4p to 26p, a year's high. It has received a payment from Customs and Excise for overpaid VAT which produced a £7.5m exceptional inflow lifting profits to £7.5m against a £788,000 loss. Further VAT claims are likely.

Specialises is using its riches to develop its shops. Its capitalisation is only £4m.

## Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items.

Other details: Ex rights: Ex dividend in £s; u: United Securities Market's Suspended; p: Partly Paid; pm: Part Paid Shares.

Source: Reuters.

## The Independent Index

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FT-SE 100 - Real-time 00 Starting Rates 04 Privatisation Issues 36  
UK Stock Market Report 01 Bullion Report 05 Water Shares 39  
UK Company News 02 West St Report 20 Secretary Shares 40  
Foreign Exchange 03 Tokyo Market 21 High Street Banks 41

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For assistance, call our helpline 071 673-4775 (9.30am - 5.30pm).

Calls cost 25p per minute (cheap rates), and 45p at all other times. Call charges include

## Market leaders: Top 20 volumes

Stock	Volume	Stock	Volume	Stock	Volume
ASDA Group	500000	Volvo	80000	Waste & Space	60000
BP	90000	Unilever	80000	RAF Royal	60000
BT	100000	Shell	80000	Waters	60000
BT	100000	Shell	80000	National Grid	60000
Hanson	100000	BP	80000	Orbit	60000
Imperial Chemical	100000	Shell	80000	Orbit	60000

## FT-SE 100 Index hour by hour

Open	High	Low	Close
3752.7	3752.7	3752.7	3752.7
3752.7	3752.7	3752.7	3752.7
3752.7	3752.7	3752.7	3752.7

## Telecommunications

Stock	Price	Change
BT	100.00	+0.50
BT	100.00	+0.50
BT	100.00	+0.50

## Retailers, Food

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50

## Retailers, General

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50

## Support Services

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50

## Recent Issues

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50

## Rights Issues

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50

## Transport

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50

## Water

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50

## Energy

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50

## Health Care

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50

## Food Manufacturers

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50

## Gas Distribution

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50

## Engineering

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50

## Building Materials

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50

## Chemicals

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50

## Building/Construction

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50

## Breweries, Pubs &amp; Rest

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50

## Banks, Retail

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50

## Banks, Merchant

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50

## Alcoholic Beverages

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50

## Distributors

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50

## Household Goods

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50

## Insurance

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50

## Leisure &amp; Hotels

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50
ASDA	100.00	+0.50



ket report: Rate cut rumours spur shares 18  
Young set to settle with C&W for £2.4m 21  
stment: New format pays off for MFI 21

BUSINESS EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

# business

THE INDEPENDENT • Saturday 2 March 1996

BUSINESS NEWS DESK: Tel 0171-293 2530 fax 0171-293 2098

## UniChem referral scuppers Lloyds chemist bid

5 GRIMOND

in two-way bid battle  
Chemists was of-  
fected into touch yester-  
day's bid to the Monop-  
olies Commission and said the  
r from Gehe of Ger-  
sed competition con-  
Department said it  
k the European Com-  
currently looking at the

German bid, to pass consid-  
eration back to the Office of Fair  
Trading.  
The news means UniChem's  
bid automatically lapses. It sent  
shares in Lloyds down 24p to  
459p, compared with Gehe's  
cash bid of 500p, while  
UniChem dipped just 3p to  
243p. It leaves UniChem sitting  
on a paper loss of around £4m  
on the 9.9 per cent sharehold-  
ing built up in Lloyds during the  
course of the bid and cuts the

value of the stake held by Allen  
Lloyd by £2.2m to £42m.  
The decision caused anger in  
the UniChem camp, whose  
costs excluding the loss on the  
shares are now thought to have  
grown to between £18m and  
£20m. It will be the second time  
in four years that the industry  
has been investigated by the  
Monopolies Commission, fol-  
lowing the inquiry in 1991-92  
into bids for MacCarthy by  
Lloyds and UniChem.

In a statement, UniChem  
chief executive Jeffrey Harris  
said: "We are very surprised and  
naturally very disappointed  
about the outcome of today's de-  
cision to refer the acquisition to  
the MMC." UniChem strongly  
believed that the acquisition  
would improve the efficiency of  
the distribution service to the in-  
dependent pharmacist and that  
the creation of a larger retailing  
chain will improve the competi-  
tiveness of our service, he said.

John Taylor, Minister for  
Competition and Consumer Af-  
fairs, said UniChem's proposals  
raised competition concerns in  
both the wholesale and retail  
markets in the UK. A takeover  
of Lloyds would add around 6  
percentage points to the whole-  
sale market shares of both bid-  
ders, each of which currently  
holds around a third of the  
market. It would leave either  
with a chemist chain to rival  
Boots 1,200 pharmacies, but

still less than the market leader's  
12 per cent market share.  
UniChem's frustration stems  
from the fact that it spent sev-  
eral weeks before the an-  
nouncement of its original bid  
in January attempting to soothe  
any competition concerns with  
the Office of Fair Trading. It be-  
lieved that proposals to sell  
two regional wholesaling op-  
erations in the north of England  
and Scotland had quelled com-  
petition concerns.

There is also anger that the  
DTI has decided at such a late  
stage in the bid to call the  
Gehe bid back from Brussels,  
given the similarity of the issues  
at stake. The timetable allows  
a further three weeks while the  
request is processed, during  
which Gehe can continue to  
prosecute its bid but UniChem  
is blocked. The bid document  
for Gehe's revised offer an-  
nounced last month is due out  
on Wednesday.



Allen Lloyd: Bid failure cuts  
his stake by £2.2m to £42m

## Hanson electricity firm enters battle with British Gas

IGAN  
Correspondent

Group, England's  
national electricity firm,  
d its claim to a share  
domestic gas market  
and slam package in-  
20 per cent discounts  
now, pay nothing  
deal.  
The threat to British  
gas is the company  
fresh row over its  
charges. A report by the  
Arthur Andersen  
bureaus and on-  
sounding to hundreds  
of pounds in the com-  
pensation of its asset  
key element in decid-  
British Gas can charge  
use its pipes.  
owe by Eastern, how  
y the industrial con-  
Hanson, has for  
been the subject of  
on within the industry,  
up, which already sup-  
panies such as ICO,  
yce and Vauxhall, said  
y that it aims to be one  
three independent gas  
by 1998.  
Turner, general man-  
Eastern Natural Gas,  
ve represent a high  
alternative to British  
addition to major cost  
customers will enjoy a

level of service and expertise  
which is substantial improve-  
ment on what they have come  
to expect. His comments come  
only days after warnings by  
Clare Spottiswoode, the indus-  
try watchdog, that British Gas  
must vastly improve service  
standards or risk a dramatic loss  
of customers to rival suppliers.  
The domestic gas market  
opens to competition from  
29 April in the South-west in an  
area covering 500,000 homes.  
Next year it extends to 2 million  
households with the market  
opening fully in 1998. Eastern  
joins a range of competitors in-  
cluding Total Gas and Amera-  
da Hess.  
South Western Electricity  
was the first electricity firm to  
launch its gas service but this has  
been blighted by complaints to  
the Trading Standards Author-  
ity over aggressive doorstep  
selling techniques.  
British Gas has yet to reveal  
its response. However there is  
a widespread view that it will  
feel unable to slash prices in the  
South-west for fear of upsetting  
customers elsewhere and to  
avoid incurring the wrath of the  
Government.  
Separately, the company  
faces the growing prospect of a  
reference to the Monopolies  
and Mergers Commission over  
imminent proposals by Ms

Spottiswoode on what it can  
charge for the use of the pipes.  
She has signalled a clampdown  
on charges and if British Gas re-  
fuses to agree it must go to the  
MMC.  
In the latest twist to the saga,  
it has emerged that a report by  
Arthur Andersen, commissioned  
by British Gas with the support  
of the rest of the industry, shows  
anomalies amounting to many  
millions of pounds in the valua-  
tion of Transco, the pipeline  
company. The asset base is a key  
part of the calculation of pipeline  
charges and rivals have argued  
that British Gas's £1.8bn figure is  
far too large, suggesting that pre-  
sent charges are unfairly high.  
British Gas has incensed riv-  
als by saying that the report  
"clears the air once and for all"  
and vindicates its position. But  
while the report says that the  
overall values are "reasonable"  
it also highlights "obvious errors  
and omissions" and "mis-  
statements".  
A spokesman for Transco  
said it was considering chang-  
ing its valuation by about  
£200m but no more. One rival  
to the company said that the fig-  
ure should be reduced by  
£1.5bn or more but the Transco  
spokesman said that the specific  
charges recommended in the  
report amount to a fraction of that.



Lord Hanson's grand slam: The Hanson-owned Eastern Group plans to offer a domestic  
gas package including discounts and a 'buy now, pay nothing until October' deal

## S Wales £60m aid package under scrutiny

RUSSELL HOTTEN

The Government, which yester-  
day announced a £230m in-  
vestment in a South Wales  
electronics plant that will cre-  
ate 770 jobs, is believed to be  
giving almost £60m in grants  
towards the project.  
European Commission officials  
are expected to study  
whether the grant package  
breaks its competition rules, in  
a move that has echoes of the  
current dispute over state aid for  
Jaguar Cars.  
QPL International, a Hong  
Kong-based manufacturer of  
microchips, is expanding its  
Newport Wafer-Fab division,  
which it bought in 1992. The ex-  
isting operation employs 500  
people, turning out micro-chips  
for personal computers and  
other electronic goods.  
William Hague, the Welsh  
Secretary, said the investment  
had been won against stiff com-  
petition from France, Italy, and  
the US. As part of the aid  
package, the Welsh Develop-  
ment Agency is to design and  
build a new factory for QPL,  
and lease the property to the  
company. David Rowe-Bed-  
doe, chairman of the WDA, said  
the lease would be fixed at  
commercial rates. QPL is also  
getting regional selective as-  
sistance and training grants from  
the local Training and Enter-  
prise Council.  
The Welsh Office refused to  
disclose the value of the grants,  
but other sources confirmed  
that reports in the Hong Kong  
press that the aid was HK\$700  
 (£58m) were correct.  
Last year an £80m aid pack-  
age towards Jaguar's £400m in-  
vestment in a new plant in  
Birmingham caused concern in  
Brussels, and about £12m of the  
grants have still to be approved.  
It is claimed that the EC's  
competition office became  
increasingly frustrated because  
the Department of Trade and  
Industry was dragging its feet  
over providing full details of the  
grants.

Mr Hague and Mr Rowe-  
Beddoe toured Japan, South  
Korea and Hong Kong in  
September basking the drum for  
investment in Wales. QPL is said  
to have indicated its intention to  
reinvest in Wales during a meet-  
ing with a WDA team in Hong  
Kong in January.  
QPL's decision follows the an-  
nouncement last month of an in-  
vestment by the South Korean  
Halla Business Group creating  
300 jobs in Merthyr Tydfil and  
an expansion by Japan's Sumi-  
tomo Precision Products creat-  
ing 100 jobs in Newport.  
Mr Rowe-Beddoe said: "It is  
a major investment for Wales,  
creating the type of highly skilled  
and well-paid jobs that we want;  
and this expansion also brings the  
possibility of even wider and  
longer economic benefits."

Work is planned to start on  
the new plant later this year and  
it is due to begin production ear-  
ly in 1997. The WDA said all the  
job vacancies should have been  
filled by mid-1998. Some of the  
grant money will be phased in  
as and when QPL meets the job  
creation target.

The Newport factory will  
produce eight-inch micron  
silicon wafer chips and have a  
peak production capacity of  
10,000 wafers per month. The  
existing factory produces 4in  
and 6in wafers used in semi-  
conductors.



William Hague: 'Investment  
won against stiff opposition'

## Recessionary signals boost rate cut hopes

JOYLE  
ILL WALLACE

recession in manufac-  
tured weaker inflationary  
in both Britain and the  
ted financial markets  
ides of the Atlantic yes-  
sants to hopes of lower  
rates.  
JK purchasing man-  
dex of manufacturing fell  
in February below divid-  
ing line between ex-  
n and contraction - for  
time since November  
US equivalent barely  
d from the previous  
weather-related de-  
1 remained below the  
1 level of 50 for the  
month in a row.  
February. Purchasing  
s' Index suggests that  
ring industry is tee-  
n the brink of reces-  
sid Adam Cole. Uni-  
st at James Capel. He  
d base rates would fall  
r current level of 6.25  
to as low as 5 per cent.  
d figures have already  
at manufacturing out-  
y 0.2 per cent in the  
ter of 1995.  
the Chancellor, Ken-  
ke, meets Eddie George,

Governor of the Bank of England,  
on Thursday, he will be able  
to point to encouraging news on  
prices and the overall weakness in  
manufacturing. The survey's prices  
index fell from 49.1 to 44.4, its low-  
est level since January 1992.  
A further sign of weakness was  
that the employment index re-  
mained below 50 for the second  
month running. Purchasing man-  
agers said the number of firms  
announcing redundancies again  
outnumbered those recruiting.  
There was also a sharp fall in  
new orders, which fell back  
from 53.0 to 50.2 in February.  
In the US, the National As-  
sociation of Purchasing Man-  
agers' index of activity rose to 45.2  
from a weak 44.9 in January. The  
index has now been pointing to a  
contraction in manufacturing  
for seven months running.  
The price component fell to  
38.3 from 39.4, its lowest since  
November 1991. Signs of infla-  
tion in manufacturing have  
been receding for over a year.  
"Figures as drab as this mean  
the Federal Reserve will not  
want to do anything other than  
ease rates," said Ian Harwood,  
international economist at  
Kleinwort Benson. He predict-  
ed a move after the Fed's next  
policy meeting on 26 March.

## Warburg 'set for more defections'

JOHN WILLCOCK

A clash of cultures in SBC  
Warburg's corporate finance  
department between the tradi-  
tional Warburgers and their  
new SBC colleagues will lead to  
more defections, insiders pre-  
dicted yesterday.  
On Thursday two long-time di-  
rectors of corporate finance left  
to join other banks, on the back  
of a number of recent departures,  
prompting renewed concerns  
about plummeting morale in  
the department that not long ago  
was the envy of the City.  
Bonuses for 1995 have recently  
been announced and will be  
paid on 15 March. Analysts say  
this will swell the flow.  
Tensions have been simmer-  
ing since Marcel Ospel, the  
Swiss chief executive, took a  
tight rein on the department last

autumn. Some insiders are say-  
ing that Warburg's traditional  
contention on giving advice  
to clients has been sacrificed by  
the SBC side, who are geared to  
selling products.  
One insider last night de-  
scribed SBC's corporate finance  
star, Brian Keelan, as "a culture  
clash for almost anyone".  
Another accused the former  
McKinsey consultant brought in  
by SBC to run the corporate fi-  
nance division, George Feiger,  
of having limited experience of  
the area.  
The source said that Mr  
Feiger had reached his position  
by being a consultant rather  
than by doing transactions.  
"He sees investment bank-  
ing as dividing everything up  
into sectoral boxes and choic-  
ing all the firm's products  
through them, whether they

are suitable or not. It's not  
what the clients want," claimed  
the source.  
The same critic stressed that  
in another key area, equities, the  
combination of Warburg's and  
SBC's businesses had been a re-  
sounding success.  
"More money has been  
pumped into the business, and  
the analysts and traders are do-  
ing pretty well," he said. SBC  
Warburg's analysts consistently  
topped the league tables for  
1995.  
SBC Warburg itself has re-  
fused to be drawn on whether  
there are problems in the cor-  
porate finance department, but  
sources inside the bank describe  
it as nonsense.  
There has just been the usual  
flow of people in and out,  
according to the bank.  
On Thursday Nicholas Fry, a

senior director in corporate fi-  
nance who had been with the  
bank for 20 years, left to head  
NatWest Markets' UK corpo-  
rate finance division. On the  
same day Stella Coulthirst, a  
director of corporate finance  
who joined 10 years ago left to  
join BZW, recruited by Mark  
Seligman, another recent SBC  
Warburg defector.  
One observer noted that such  
a diaspora of senior figures was  
doubtly damaging, in that they  
would now be well placed to re-  
cruit more people from SBC  
Warburg.  
There are also growing rum-  
ours of important client  
losses, another reflection of  
the tensions within the corpo-  
rate finance team. Others to  
have gone recently include  
Derek Higgs, to head the Pru-  
dential's investment arm.

## High UK costs deepen Escom's losses

Escom, the German computer-  
maker that took over Rumber-  
g last year, warned yesterday  
that its losses for 1995 would be  
sharply higher than forecast last  
week, writes Russell Hottel.  
The company had forecast it  
would sink about DM45 (£29m)  
into the red, by has now said  
that the real figure would be  
more like DM125m (£55.5m)  
because of slow year-end sales  
and high UK costs.

Escom, the second biggest re-  
tailer of computers in Germany  
behind Kaufhof AG's Vobis, said  
the massive loss meant it  
had to raise DM440m from  
banks and another DM600m  
through a share offering.  
"The sales turnaround in  
Germany and the world-wide  
drop in computer prices have  
continued through mid-Febru-  
ary," Escom said.  
Shares in Escom, suspended

on Wednesday at DM16.35,  
fell to a record low of DM11.95  
before steadying around DM1.  
Escom, considered the 10th-  
largest computer seller in Eu-  
rope, is the latest personal  
computer manufacturer to re-  
port weaker profits or a loss for  
1995 due to weak sales in the  
normally buoyant fourth quar-  
ter, including Christmas.  
Some analysts said the Euro-  
pean market would see tough

price competition after the  
marked slow-down in business,  
and Escom could cut prices in  
order to rebuild market share.  
Industry tracker Dataquest  
said Escom's market share in  
Europe fell to 3.2 per cent in the  
fourth quarter from about four  
per cent in 1994.  
But industry analysts said  
Escom itself, majority-owned by  
founder Manfred Schniitz, must  
take the blame for its plight.

### STOCK MARKETS

Index	1995/96 High	1995/96 Low	Yield (%)
Dow Jones	3781.30	2954.20	3.91
Nikkei	4236.40	3300.90	3.47
FTSE 100	1882.10	1482.40	3.82
DAX	2058.71	1678.61	3.07
IBEX	1852.03	1469.23	3.78
ASX	5504.41	3632.06	2.12
Hang Seng	20168.63	14485.40	0.771
Hong Kong	11194.94	6967.93	3.311
Shanghai	2501.22	1910.96	1.851

Source: FT Information

### INTEREST RATES

Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	Long Bond	10 Year	30 Year
UK	6.19	6.19	7.82	8.82	7.96	8.61	-
US	5.47	5.25	6.02	7.36	5.41	7.55	-
Japan	0.53	0.75	2.12	4.25	-	-	-
Germany	3.25	3.94	6.29	7.40	7.11	-	-

### CURRENCIES

Index	1995/96 High	1995/96 Low	Yield (%)
£/\$	1.5284	1.6249	0.615
£/DM	1.5270	1.6256	0.614
DM/\$	2.2568	2.3281	1.4329
¥/\$	161.178	173.153	0.215
£/Index	83.6	87.9	0.2

### OTHER INDICATORS

Index	1995/96 High	1995/96 Low	Yield (%)
Oil Brent \$	17.81	16.79	15.79
Gold \$	398.20	376.9	2.2
Gold £	260.59	232.72	1.02
RPI	150.2	146.0	2.1
GDP	107.1	105.1	0.5
Base Rates	6.25pc	6.75	-

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- Enterprise Investment: A risky way to have fun 24
- My worst investment: A £150,000 Aston Martin 25



When you start  
a small business,  
the last thing  
you need is a bank  
that treats  
you like one.

Some banks think they need to hold your hand when you're a small business. We don't. We just give you sound, professional financial guidance. New businesses benefit from the same high quality service that huge corporations enjoy. Plus free Business Information Fact Sheets and free Business Opportunity Profiles, as well as the widest range of Government and E.U. loans. At Barclays don't expect special treatment because you've just started up. Expect it all the time.



BUSINESS ACCOUNT







Despite the undoubted benefits from direct investment, it still leaves many people feeling uneasy. Early worries about Britain becoming the home of screwdriver plants have not been wholly dispelled.

## We pay a heavy price for inward investment

The rush of inward investment continues apace. The latest project is a £230m expansion in silicon chip production, creating 770 jobs – courtesy of the Hong Kong electronics company QPL. Proof positive, ministers proclaim, that their electioneering slogan of Britain as the enterprise centre of Europe adds up to jobs on the ground.

Cynics will point rather to the level of public funds going into the plant via the Welsh Development Agency. More generally, the question raised by this and other projects is whether it is really such a compliment to receive so much inward investment.

The scale of the flow into the UK is certainly substantial. In the first three quarters of 1995, no less than £11bn of direct investment took place – more than 2 per cent of GDP. More important, the inflow was equivalent to almost 15 per cent of total investment in the economy – this at a time when growth in capital spending has been extremely disappointing.

Much of the inflow has in practice gone on the purchase of financial assets through mergers and takeovers, rather than new investment on the ground. But clearly foreign firms are now playing a highly significant role in renewing the country's capital stock.

Nowhere is this more so than in manufacturing, for so long the Achilles' heel of the British economy. Foreign firms now account for almost a third of total industrial investment. They equip each of their workers with double the amount of plant and equipment

provided by UK-owned firms. It comes as no surprise, then, that foreign-owned firms produce 40 per cent more per worker than their UK counterparts.

However, despite the undoubted benefits from direct investment, it still leaves many people feeling uneasy. Early worries about Britain becoming the home of screwdriver plants have not been wholly dispelled. It is true that foreign investors conduct a fair amount of research in Britain. Their share of manufacturing research and development was 19 per cent in 1989, hardly less than their 21 per cent share of turnover. However, this is less encouraging than it seems, because the big multinationals who predominate in foreign investment spend disproportionately on R&D. Certainly the evidence of "Silicon Glen" – the concentration of electronics manufacturing in Scotland – is that the local economy remains strongest in assembly work rather than higher value areas.

Furthermore, while manufacturing has been assisted by foreign investment, the long slide in its share of GDP has not been reversed. Ten years ago, it accounted for just over a quarter of national output; now it accounts for little over a fifth. No doubt the position would have been considerably worse without the big investments made by foreign companies. Yet the inward flow testifies as much to the underlying weakness of manufacturing, with foreign investors resettling huge swathes of industry – like colour television production – abandoned by second-rate home producers.

So we get industrial regeneration of a kind. But it comes on the terms of the multinationals who have selected Britain as a base. There is a price to be paid and this is not just overt or covert forms of industrial support. More importantly, the freedom of policymakers to tax business is restricted. The interest of foreign investors in strategic questions such as Britain's place in Europe also has to be considered. Multinationals have invested in the UK as a springboard for a European market and they don't want to see that threatened. For all the Tory Euro-sceptic rhetoric, the effect is to constrain ministerial freedom of manoeuvre. This may be no bad thing. In the end, however, the price we pay for inward investment is loss of control.

### European minefield for Lloyds Chemists bids

For those interested in the arcane world of EU competition policy, the Lloyds Chemists takeover saga is proving quite a treasure. As this column warned it might be, the UniChem bid for Lloyds, one of Britain's biggest pharmacy chains, was yesterday referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. At the same time the OFT asked that the rival bid by Gehe should be brought back to Britain from Brussels for consideration by the MMC alongside UniChem. Gehe is a German company. The cross-

border nature of its bid gives Brussels jurisdiction. Clearly it would be ridiculous for UniChem to be referred to the MMC and not Gehe, for as far as the UK is concerned, the two companies are mirror images of each other. Their bids raise exactly the same competition issues.

However, claiming Gehe back from Brussels is more than just a formality. What has to happen is that a particular domestic competition problem – say undue concentration of market power in Yorkshire – has to be demonstrated. The MMC then has to consider its deliberations to that specific concern. What the Office of Fair Trading is doing with UniChem and wants to do with Gehe is have a wide-ranging inquiry dealing with issues of "vertical integration" and anything else that takes the MMC's fancy. It hasn't actually raised a "specific" concern. The application form is as a consequence incorrectly filled in.

A field day for Gehe's lawyers, then. The European Commission would like to say to say yes to the British competition authorities, but technically it may be barred from doing so. Don't forget the politics of this, however. Brussels is at present trying to extend its remit for examining cross-border mergers by reducing the qualifying size. In this it is facing fierce resistance from both Britain and Germany. But if the EC agreed to hand back more cases to domestic competition authorities, Britain might just be persuaded to drop its opposition. Here's another good reason, therefore, why Brus-

sels might in this case be persuaded to bend the rules.

Competition law may be an arcane world, but most people are capable of understanding the concept of one law for UniChem, a British company, and an altogether different and less onerous one for Gehe, a German company. It is plainly not right.

### Labour attack on rail link is nonsense

It is not often, these days, that it is possible to write in support of a government initiative, but the ground on which Labour has chosen to attack the high speed rail link is so much nonsense. Certainly the delays and shifting of position which have characterised this project have been farcical. But to portray the whole thing as a gigantic giveaway to the private sector, as Clive Short, Labour's transport spokeswoman, does, is tish. Nobody would have even considered building this link without a very considerable direct Government grant. While some important assets – quite a lot of land, the Waterloo international terminal, St Pancras Station and a one-third interest in Eurostar – have been thrown in for good measure, they only have a value if it is possible to make money out of them. So far the state has failed, so why not give the private sector a go?

## Lord Young to settle for £2.4m

MARY FAGAN  
Industrial Correspondent

Lord Young of Graham is poised to accept a £2.4m compensation package following his ousting in November as chairman of Cable & Wireless after a boardroom row with James Ross, who was also forced to leave the company. The expected agreement comes after months of bitter negotiation between the company and its former head, who is thought to have been demanding about £4m.

The deal for Lord Young includes the right to exercise share options which at yesterday's price would make him a profit of almost £2m. He is also likely to receive a further £400,000 in salary, bonuses and other benefits.

In structure the package is similar to that agreed with Mr. Ross, who agreed a £1.3m deal last week. The discussions with Lord Young are thought to have proved more delicate as he had no formal service contract with the company.

The size of the settlements have raised eyebrows in the City as the row between the two men became acrimonious and public, damaging the image of the group.

At the time, analysts said that the situation increased the vulnerability of C&W, which for months had been at the centre of takeover speculation. One commentator said that the reward seemed rather high for failing to get on with colleagues.

Shares in C&W closed at £4.52 yesterday, an increase on the opening price of 7.5p.

A spokesman for the group declined to comment on any deal with the former chairman. "Our position is that we have made an offer and are awaiting a response."

However, it is thought that talks are drawing to a successful close and that Lord Young may use the money to establish a company advising business on investment overseas.

The debacle has left C&W without a chief executive.

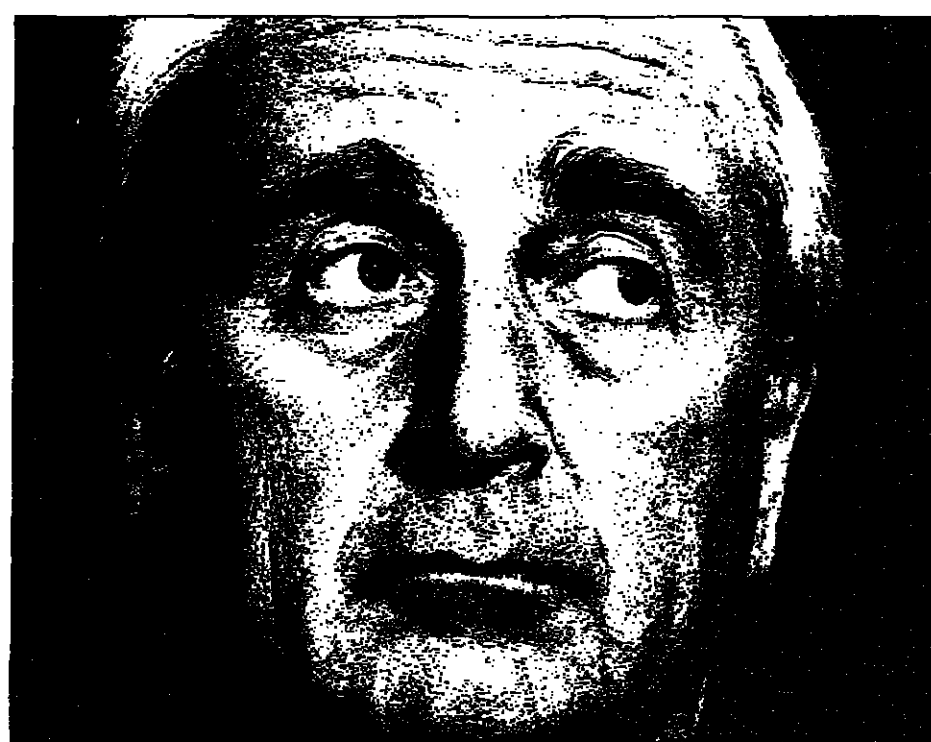
Duncan Lewis, former chief executive of its Mercury Communications subsidiary was in the running but is thought not to be on the shortlist.

Rod Olsen, the finance director who has been appointed acting chief executive, also ruled himself out.

The view is that the group is poised to appoint a foreigner to the post, possibly from a large US cable or telecommunications company. C&W recently took the step of changing its articles to allow a non-Briton to take the job.

Some City analysts still believe that the group is ripe for break-up. There has been speculation that BT may attempt a deal with AT&T of the US to acquire C&W and divide the spoils.

BT would not be allowed to have Mercury but would be interested in the substantial assets in the Far East and the Pacific region. AT&T, which is attempting to break into the UK telecommunications market, could use Mercury to leapfrog into a pole position.



Delicate discussions: Lord Young had no formal service contract with Cable & Wireless

## Fidelity selling BET

RUSSELL HOTTEN

Fidelity, the global investment house, has been a heavy seller of shares in BET, the industrial services group facing a hostile £1.9bn bid from Rentokil.

The firm, the second largest shareholder in BET before the bid was announced last month, has reduced its stake from 5.17 per cent to about 3.3 per cent.

Mercury Asset Management, which held 1.7 per cent at the start of the bid battle, is also thought to have been a steady seller.

Share traders have said there has been heavy demand from the United States as

arbitrageurs piled into BET in the hope that Rentokil will increase its offer.

One analyst said that the move by the two investment firms suggested some doubts that Rentokil would increase its offer significantly.

"There seems to be a lot of hedging of bets here. BET had been a dog and it makes sense to cash in a few shares," the analyst said.

The offer is nine new Rentokil shares and £8 cash for every 20 BET shares, valuing BET at 190p a share at the start of the bid.

Meanwhile, BET is not expected to publish its offer document until the middle of next week at the earliest.

### COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Performance (p)	2.53m (+2.3m)	0.51m (+0.58m)	4p (+4.9p)	- (+)
Go-Ahead Group (p)	87.6m (+8.7m)	6.68m (+1.1m)	12.69p (+2.03p)	1.85p (+0.6p)
Henlys Group (p)	452m (+40m)	25.3m (+1.6m)	34.1p (+2.5p)	12p (+0.5p)
Memory Corp (p)	0.55m (+)	-1.95m (+1.05m)	-3.31p (+2.11p)	nil (+)
Spangley Consulting (p)	7.38m (+0.2m)	0.90m (+1.21m)	4.43p (+0.29p)	-p (-0.5p)
Specialised (p)	21.8m (+2.4m)	7.84m (+0.78m)	33.45p (+5.06p)	0.75p
UK Estates (p)	- (+)	0.11m (+0.53m)	0.11p (+0.89p)	1p (+1p)

(p) - Final (i) - Interim (M) - Nine months

### THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

Edited by Magnus Grimond

## Homeworks pays off for MFI as sales creep up

On the face of it, yesterday's trading update from MFI signalled that at least one of the pressures affecting the furniture retailer was easing. Continuing sluggish retail demand in the UK has kept the bid on sales reported in the half-way stage was not maintained into the third quarter.

The group says that sales were up 2 per cent between mid-November and the end of February, which includes the key post-Christmas selling period. With trading "poor" in the run-up to the festive season, that implies growth of nearer 4 to 5 per cent in the new year period. The news was welcomed by the stock market yesterday, which marked MFI's shares up higher to 158p.

But that may be premature jubilation. Depressed sales have been only part of the group's problem. Margins have been under pressure for some time from rising raw material prices. Hopes in December that reductions evident then would ease the situation now look overdone.

MFI indicated yesterday that although gross margins have recovered some of the ground lost in the first half, they will still be down on the year. It appears that lower costs are taking longer to feed through the buying chain than expected and the benefits will not be felt until next year.

Margins could end the year a full point lower than last year, making 1995/96 the third year in a row in which returns on sales have fallen.

Admittedly, there was better news from elsewhere yesterday. The initial roll-out of the new MFI Homeworks format, which extends beyond the traditional ranges to include beds, pots and pans and the like, has clearly been a success. Sales outperformed the rest of the chain by 12 per cent, triggering the next phase of the conversion programme which should see another 35 to 40 of the existing 185 chains changed to Homeworks.

France, meanwhile, has shrugged aside the strikes to record a 50 per cent increase in orders since Christmas. But the business is small and, given the record and the cloudy outlook in the UK, MFI shares remain overvalued on a forward rating of 20.

### Henlys speeds ahead of rivals

Henlys shareholders who supported management in fending off a £30m bid from the rival motor dealer Cowie more than three years ago have been amply rewarded.

#### MFI: at a glance

Market value: £921m, share price 158p

#### Five year record

Year ended 31/12

1992 1993 1994 1995 1996\*

Turnover (£m)

7.8 15.5 87.8 85.1 88

Pre-tax profits (£m)

3.75 4.00 4.25 4.5

Underlying share price (p)

100 110 120 130 140 150 160 170 180

1992 1993 1994 1995 1996

#### Share price

period

1992 1993 1994 1995 1996

100 110 120 130 140 150 160 170 180

1992 1993 1994 1995 1996

100 110 120 130 140 150 160 170 180

1992 1993 1994 1995 1996

100 110 120 130 140 150 160 170 180

1992 1993 1994 1995 1996

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1992 1993 1994 1995 1996

100 110 120 130 140 150 160 170 180

FT  
FINANCIAL TIMES  
Magazines

## ARE YOUR PERSONAL FINANCES ON TARGET?

Personal financial planning means more than just having an array of investments, a tax-free savings account and shares in the odd utility company. If you haven't yet thought of avoiding inheritance tax, made a provision for long-term nursing care or even begun to check interest rates on a regular basis, you could well be missing out some important aspects of sound investment.

In the next issue of Investors Chronicle we examine in detail all the essential elements of financial planning to ensure you are well provided for, both now and in the

future. We'll advise you how to make the most of tax-breaks, help you to identify the investment products with the lowest charges, and show you how to pick the top performers amongst Peps, investment trusts and unit trusts.

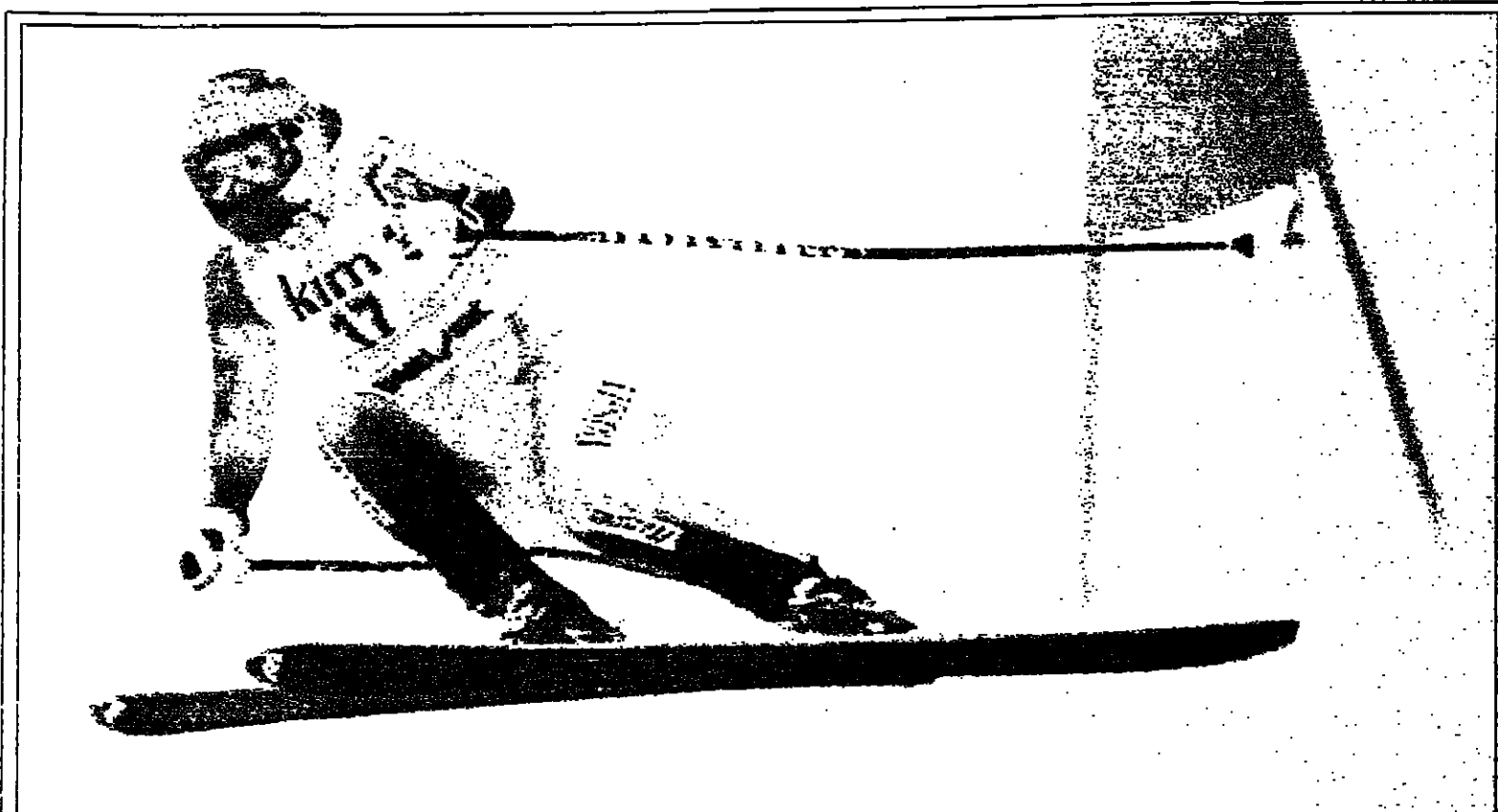
So, if you've still to take out your Pep for 95/96, are having worries about self-assessment of tax or are simply wanting a few pointers for a more considered investment strategy, don't miss the Investors Chronicle guide to Personal Financial Planning with the latest issue.

On sale Friday 1st March. Price £2.00.

INVESTORS  
CHRONICLE  
THE CITY INSIDE OUT



## sport



Varvara Zelenskaya became the first Russian to win a World Cup event when she triumphed in the downhill competition in Narvik, Norway, yesterday. The American, Picabo Street, finished in second place but it was enough to give her a second downhill title. Photograph: Reuters

## Benn back on familiar territory

### Boxing

Victory by half a point over Thulane "Sugar Boy" Malinga in their first meeting in Birmingham nearly four years ago was the prelude to a memorable and lucrative 41-month phase in Nigel Benn's career.

Benn beat Italy's Mauro Galvao in his next fight in Rome to land the World Boxing Council super-middleweight title and now, second time around against the 36-year-old South African in the 10th defence of his title at the Newcastle Arena tonight, Benn knows exactly what is on his agenda - a big

money unification fight against Ireland's Steve Collins in late May or June.

Then, maybe, a match with the International Boxing Federation champion, Roy Jones, if the politics of the American cable networks can be overcome. Or perhaps a third fight with Chris Eubank if his arch-rival decides to make a ring return.

So the message is clear. Benn cannot afford to let the man from Ladysmith, Natal, run him so close this time. "At the end of the day everybody's entitled to one close decision at the office, but then I went out and put it all right," said the 32-year-old Benn. "I don't recall too much

about Malinga apart from the fact that he's a strong boy, but I don't want to take anything away from him. He definitely wanted to win that night."

"We had a close fight and it could have gone either way, but I got it and I'm very thankful for that. I didn't have chance to train long enough for that one, but now I'm world champion I train hard for six to eight weeks properly. You'll see a new Nigel Benn, that's for sure."

"I think 1996 will go for me exactly as 1995. I'm not ready to relinquish my title - the belt is staying in England until the day I retire. I still feel new. I feel I can go as long as I want. I still

feel there are four or five good fights left in me. I don't like losing, and the thought of losing drives me on."

Malinga has not fought since labouring to beat Leicester's Trevor Ambrose on the Benn-Vincenzo Nardiello undercard at the London Arena last July. That was Malinga's only fight in the past year, and only two contests in 18 months makes it puzzling why he claimed the WBC's mandatory challenger's spot. But Malinga has, at least, had five successive wins since being outclassed and knocked out in six rounds by Jones in August 1993 - his only stoppage in 49 fights. This will be Malinga's fourth

attempt to win a world title, having lost previously to Germany's Graciano Rocchigiani (IBF), the American Lindell Holmes (IBF) and Eubank (World Boxing Organisation) in the fight before he lost to Benn. Joe Bugner's WBO Intercontinental heavyweight title challenge against Brighton's Scott Welch will now go ahead in Berlin on 16 March. After two failed attempts to get Bugner licensed by the British Board of Control, the promoter Frank Warren has managed to get the fight switched to Germany. It will appear on the same show as Ralf Roockigiani's next WBO cruiserweight title defence.

## Radcliffe misses out on trials

### Athletics

MIKE ROWBOTTOM

A large field of runners will step out into a large field in Northumberland tomorrow in pursuit of a trip to South Africa. Sadly, but sensibly, Paula Radcliffe will not be among them.

The British Athletic Federation Cross-Country Championships at Stakeford, which form the trial for the World Championships in Cape Town on 23 March, will lack the Briton who has the best chance of an individual world medal, following her minor injury last weekend.

Having bruised and cut her knee on wooden steps during a race in Diekerk, Luxembourg, the 22-year-old Loughborough student informed the BAF that she did not want to risk running in a trial where the going is likely to be firm. Assuming the injury is not worse than expected,

she will take one of the two women's discretionary places available for Cape Town.

"It is not particularly welcome news," said Matt Frazer, secretary of the BAF cross-country commission. "But we understand what she is saying. She has more than proved her fitness in recent races."

Unlike last year, when the World Championships were held in Durham, this year's location offers the opportunity of time-ly warm-weather training, with the option of altitude training. This lure is one of the reasons why the depth of talent this time around is significantly greater.

In Radcliffe's absence, Lucy Elliott, Alison Wyeth, Suzanne Rigg, Liz Talbot, Angie Hulley, Vikkie McPherson and Sonia McGeorge will be among those seeking the first four automatic selection places.

The men's race includes the Commonwealth 10,000m champion, Rob Denmark, Adrian

Parry, Martin Jones, Jon Nuttall, Jon Brown, last year's European cross-country bronze medalist, Andrew Pearson, who is third in the World Cross Challenge ratings, and the man two places behind him, Chris Sweeney.

Keith Cullen and Gary Staines have both sustained recent injuries - Cullen hurting a hamstring in the Luxembourg race, Staines turning his ankle two weeks ago. They are likely to make late decisions on whether to hope for one of the two discretionary men's places rather than seek one of the automatic places for the first seven home.

Sweeney offered a personal analysis of the situation this week: "There are probably going to be four or five clear favourites for the side, and another two to four places up for grabs, with probably 20 guys struggling for them. I intend to be one of those 20."

## Day of destiny for struggling clubs

### Hockey

BILL COLWILL

It is quite possible that by tomorrow evening all the six clubs expecting to be relegated from the National League First Division will know their fate. Although Indian Gymkhana and Trojans can mathematically avoid the drop, the odds are that Bournville, St Albans, Hull and Stourport will have decided their destiny.

Tomorrow Indian Gymkhana entertain Barford Tigers, who are just two places above them but with an eight-point lead, while Trojans, a point adrift of Gymkhana, take the long trip to Hull who, should they lose this afternoon's rearranged game against the defending champions, Teddington, will be relegated along with the bottom club, Stourport.

The situation at the top is providing plenty of excitement. The current leaders, Southgate, may find the going tough away to a young Canterbury side and could drop points.

Second-placed Cannock are expected to win at home to Teddington, who are still without the injured Great Britain captain, Jason Laslett. Guildford, in third position, should have few problems away to Stourport, so the musical chairs at the top could continue.

The sport mourned the death yesterday from cancer of Yvonne Horner, a much respected former international umpire and coach. Her enthusiasm and commitment to the game will be greatly missed, particularly in her native Yorkshire and the Thirsk club.

### HYPERION

2.10 Rowlandsdon Charm 2.40 Baranov 3.10 Quality 3.45 Secret Spring 4.15 Stand Tall 4.45 Willie Rushton

GOING: Standard.  
DRAW ADVANTAGE: Low numbers are best in sprint.  
Left-hand, sharp undulating course.  
Close to SE of town on B5022. Longfield railway station (served by London Victoria) adjacent course. ADVERTISEMENT: Merton & L3, Tottenham 25, Silver Ring 35, C&S F&M: Club 55, rest free.

WINNERS IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS: (See Shadow 4.15) was here on Tuesday.  
LONG-DISTANCE ENDURERS: Stand Tall (4.15) travels 270 miles from C. Thornton's Middleham stable in North Yorkshire; Winter Aspects (4.45) comes 270 miles from M. Johnston's Middleham yard in North Yorkshire.

2.10 TAURUS CLAIMING STAKES (CLASS F)

£3,450 added 3YO 1m  
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# Dunwoody waits for Fortune And Fame

**Racing**  
**GREG WOOD**

The fragile physique of Fortune And Fame will decide the destination of the best sprinter of the season, the Alderbrook in the Champion Hurdle at Cheltenham on Tuesday week.

Richard Dunwoody, who

partnered the reigning champion at Kempton seven days ago, has been offered the book

following yesterday's injury to the luckless Norman Williams, but is already committed

to Fortune And Fame - if

Dermot Weld's hurdler makes it to the Festival.

It is one of the many impos-

derables surrounding this year's showpiece meeting and several more were added yesterday afternoon when Adrian Maguire's broken collar-bone forced him too on to the sidelines. Fortune And Fame's participation will be determined after he has galloped on Sunday, and if he goes to Cheltenham, Dunwoody's decision will be made for him.

"I have offered Richard the ride on Alderbrook, and I hope that Jamie Osborne can ride Master Oats in the Gold Cup," Kim Bailey, the pair's trainer, said yesterday. "But I won't know anything for certain until next week. One jockey who will not be sitting by the phone,

though, is Graham Bradley, who lost the ride on Alderbrook at Kempton when he overstepped and failed to turn up for a schooling session on the horse. In Maguire's absence, Char-

**RICHARD EDMONDSON**  
**NAP: Purevalve**  
**(Newbury 3.40)**  
**NB: Too Plush**  
**(Newbury 1.30)**

lie Swan is expected to ride Viking Flagship as the horse seeks a third successive victory in the Champion Chase. "I feel very sorry for Adrian, I hope it's not as bad as they think," David Nicholson, Viking Flagship's

trainer, said. "My assistant has already been on the phone to Charlie Swan. We will have around 25 runners at the Festival and will use the best jockeys available. Richard Johnson [Nicholson's conditional jockey] has a great chance to make a name for himself." Tony McCoy, the season's leading rider, is another who could benefit.

The bookings on Alderbrook and Master Oats became available when William dislocated his right shoulder for the second time in three weeks on the gallops yesterday morning. "I want to give a horse a saddle and the saddle and it went," Williamson said. "I put it back in myself, I felt like Mel Gibson.

I could have kept my mouth shut and carried on, but it would have been a waste of time and it had come out in a race it would have been a danger to others."

Williamson will now need an operation to correct the problem. "It will probably be three months before I can ride again, but it can take longer," he said. "I will probably do some press and television work at Cheltenham, and I would rather be there than lying on a beach somewhere wondering what had won."

With the Festival now imminent, this afternoon's racing is predictably uninspiring, although the Great Yorkshire Chase at Doncaster, resched-

uled after its original date fell victim to the weather, is a notable exception. The move to the spring may well become permanent, something which punters would surely welcome.

Dextra Dove, whose long winning streak was very narrowly ended by Sunley Bay at Newbury last month, is the favourite, but at around 11-4 there are good reasons to oppose him. His last race was a hard one, he is possibly better with more cut in the ground and the handicapper may now have his measure. Take a chance instead with **SIR PETER LELY** (nap 4.05), who thrives on fast ground and comes from a yard that is running into form.

GREAT YORKSHIRE CHASE 10-YEAR-OLD									
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## sport

## Still football crazy after all these years

Peter Beardsley has been seen and done most things, but he still can't wait for Monday's game with Manchester United. He told Glenn Moore why

He stayed behind for extra training, he collected up the cones and markers, and with Les Ferdinand, he was still signing autographs long after most of his team-mates were showered and changed. Newcastle may be on the brink of one of their most important matches in their recent history but for Peter Beardsley yesterday, it was business as usual. When Alex Ferguson suggested Newcastle will crack under the pressure of the title run-in, it was not Peter Beardsley he had in mind. Alone among the Newcastle team to face Manchester United at St James' Park on Monday night, he already has an English championship medal in his locker - two of them. He also carries the bitter memory of twice finishing second. He has been there, done that, and always with a certain style.

Thus, while the club has adopted an out-of-character siege mentality this week, Beardsley remains unaffected. An interview request was readily agreed to, with the proviso, made almost with embarrassment, that Kevin Keegan would have to grant permission first. Keegan trusts his captain and, having finally left the pitch at Durham University's Maiden Castle complex yesterday, Beardsley was able to explain how Monday's match excites, rather than intimidates. "I can't wait," he said. "If you cannot look forward to this there is no point in being in the game. If someone told me at the beginning of the season: 'You will be four points clear at the beginning of March, playing the second-placed team to go seven clear, I would have been delighted.'"

"It becomes more enjoyable as you go on. At my age (35) everything is a bonus and I am in a position everybody would like to be in - captain of your home-town club, going for something like this."

A draw would be acceptable to Newcastle but Beardsley is well aware of the danger of settling for a stalemate in advance.

"The two years I won the title with Liverpool, we did quite comfortably. The close one was when Arsenal won with the last kick of the season. We did not need to win the game, they did. They took a few risks and got away with it. In many



Peter Beardsley at Newcastle United's training ground yesterday: 'It becomes more enjoyable as you go on'

Photograph: Simon Wilkinson

ways it is better chasing than being in the lead. We can afford a draw on Monday but we are not a team to go looking for one. Especially at home, we have won 13 out of 13 and we are looking for 19 out of 19."

Beardsley has a particular incentive to do well. He came late to stardom - rejected by Gillingham and Cambridge, he had a spell of unemployment and then worked in an engineering factory. Carlisle discovered him at 18 and he also played for Vancouver Whitecaps before, in 1982, he appeared to have broken into the big time. Manchester United, impressed by Beardsley's display against them in a tour match (including a goal in 13 seconds - after United had kicked off) signed him.

However, in a frustrating season

he played just one game, a League Cup tie against Bournemouth, before Ron Atkinson allowed him to return to Canada. It was another two seasons before, at the age of 23, he was to play in the top flight with Newcastle. Beardsley maintains he gets on well with Atkinson, but believes he was never given a chance.

"It is always special to play against Manchester United but not in the way it is with Liverpool and Everton, where I played in the first team. A lot of the Manchester United fans probably do not remember I was there. But it is the biggest club in the country, the place is special and the people are - Brian Kidd, Norman Davies (the kit man), Paddy who were there when I was there."

From Vancouver Beardsley

joined Newcastle, then Liverpool, but he never forgot the early years. "Working in a factory helped me realise how lucky I am. Now the

**'At my age all this is a bonus and I am in a position everybody would like to be in'**

money is coming in I am able to look after my family better than I was able to be looked after. I appreciate what I have got."

He is in no hurry to let it go.

Last week Beardsley was Newcastle's best player in the 3-3 draw with Manchester City. Prompting and providing, his skills stood comparison with David Ginola and Faustino Asprilla. He remains in Terry Venables' plans and, with Nick Barmby suffering a loss of form, may yet be a key player in England's Euro 96 challenge. "I am hopeful rather than confident. I want to be there but I am not convinced I will be - he [Terry Venables] has so much choice. It will be like a mini-World Cup."

"I am trying to stay a part of it as long as possible. Because the game has got quicker the older players, who use their heads, can stay in the game longer. The likes of Gordon Strachan and Ray Wilkins, who have clever brains, make the

ball do the work." The latter pair make much of their devotion to diet - but Beardsley is fuelled by natural fitness and enthusiasm.

"I have never drunk alcohol [he does not like the taste] but I eat what I want. When we go away on a Friday night, I always have chicken soup and roast chicken, other than that I eat what the kids at home eat. I think it is because I train the way I do. When I pack it in I may have to be careful. I eat a fair bit of chocolate. I have been lucky with injuries - I have not had a serious operation."

The enthusiasm is the easiest part of the game. It is easy for anybody to run about and chase people. The kids in the dressing-room keep you young - you have to be on your toes otherwise they take it

out of you. I would miss that atmosphere more than anything."

With Asprilla coming in to partner Les Ferdinand, Beardsley played in a more withdrawn role against City. Keegan has long envisaged Beardsley further progressing his career by making such a move, but the player himself is less keen.

"Ideally, I would rather be up front but we have such a good squad now you have to be happy to play anywhere. Many people would give their right arm to be in my position, wherever it is in the team. The boss knows I will accept it and make the most of it. Last week I felt I played really well there. It sounds big-headed but I did not give the ball away many times, and I was always there trying to help."

"I do not know what will happen on Monday. Ray Lee will be back so, whether he alters the balance and plays four at the back or leaves out a midfielder, I do not know. He has some decisions to make. He will not tell us until seven o'clock on Monday night. That is always the way - he did not tell us on Saturday until two o'clock."

"I do not know how the game will go. I have a horrible feeling it will be an anticlimax. Everyone is talking about the game of the season - and in terms of what is at stake it is going to be - but it might not be what people expect. If it is a 4-4 draw everybody will be delighted but I have a speaking feeling it could be a 1-0."

"They have got to be positive and, when I have seen them away from home, on Sky, they have been. They have so much pace in the side. They can adapt to any situation - hopefully, with so much depth in the squad, we can as well."

"[Eric] Cantona is on a different planet, he is that special. It is nice for me that people say he plays the same role. It is a compliment to me if people say we are on the same level."

"I think he and Coley [Andy Cole] will be the top pair in the country next season. We will see the real Andy Cole. He will have settled in - he has just had a baby, which takes some getting used to - and he and Cantona will have the whole season together."

By then Beardsley hopes to be playing in the Champions' League. That would be unbelievable, especially for the fans. It means so much up here. We have not won the League since 1928. We have not been to Wembley for 20 years. To lift the Premiership trophy as the captain of this club would be special. The first trophy is always the hardest to win."

First, however, there is Manchester United to deal with...

## City trial for second Georgian

Manic Monday looms on Tuesday, but more than a third of the sides trailing the Uniteds of Newcastle and Manchester will today be concentrating on being clear of the Premiership's bottom three by mid-May rather than pondering the destination of the championship.

Relegation, with the lost face and finance it entails, could be catastrophic for Manchester City. The urgency of their plight yesterday prompted Alan Ball to sign a second Georgian international, Mikhail Kavashvili, on trial from Spartak Vladikavkaz with a view to a £1.5m deal. Kavashvili, a striker recommended to Ball by Georgi Kinkladze - with whom he played for Dinamo Tbilisi last season - is not eligible to face Blackburn. Nevertheless his arrival suggests City aim to survive playing with freedom rather than fear.

Encouraged by having scored three times against champions-elect Newcastle a week ago, when Kinkladze virtually was overshadowed by the Curie-Asprilla feuds, they may find the champions' travel sickness makes them ideal fall-w-up opponents.

City occupy the highest of the relegation places, although they have the same points tally (25) as the three clubs immediately above them. Sheffield Wednesday, who tackle a Bayern-bound Nottingham Forest with a 7-1 home humiliation to avenge, have only four more.

## Phil Shaw looks forward to an eventful programme of matches over the weekend

Apart from City, Coventry arguably have most to lose. They have enjoyed 29 years' unbroken membership of the top division and allowed Ron Atkinson to spend unprecedented sums to maintain it. Against West Ham, the form of newcomers Eoin Jess and Liam Daish is likely to come under even more intense scrutiny after the revelation that a Labour MP put £5m towards transfers.

Superior goal difference makes Southampton the best-

## Rangers pursue Riedle

## Scottish football

Rangers' Europe-wide pursuit of new talent has turned to the German Bundesliga and Borussia Dortmund's experienced international striker, Karlheinz Riedle, writes Rupert McEuff. Walter Smith, the Borussia manager, is keen to sign Riedle, who played with Paul Gascoigne at Lazio in Italy. On Thursday Smith spent £1.5m on the Danish international striker, Erik Bo Andersen, from Aalborg.

Rangers have reportedly offered a £2m package to Riedle, who will be out of contract this summer. However, Dortmund placed of the queue quartet as they face the injury-troubled Teddy Sheringham and Chris Armstrong at Tottenham. Wimbledon, sandwiched between the Saints and Sky Blues, receive Chelsea a week before their FA Cup quarter-final collision. Those who would not lament the Dons' demotion should know they have scored as many goals as fourth-placed Aston Villa.

Belton's 16 points leave their position looking forlorn. John

McGinlay and Alan Stubbs are recalled from the bench at Leeds, for whom Tomas Brolin starts for the first time since 31 January. Whether Howard Wilkinson lets him finish the match is another matter.

Queen's Park Rangers are being written off with 21 points, perhaps prematurely in the age of three points for a win. However, a 100 per cent record in London derbies this season (eight games, eight defeats) does not augur well for Arsenal's visit.

Villa's appearance on the fringe of the title race is an example to all the strugglers. After avoiding relegation on the final day last season, they go to Liverpool tomorrow with one Wembley place secure, another possible and a good chance of qualifying for Europe via the Premiership. Liverpool, 2-0 victors at Villa Park a month ago, must win to keep the pressure on the top two.

It is an important weekend in the First Division too, with the leaders Derby putting a long unbeaten run against fourth-placed Huddersfield, who boast just one post-war win at the Baseball Ground. Derby may look assured of promotion, but Sunderland and Charlton have games in hand.

Stoke, in fifth place despite restrictions on Lou Macari's spending power, will also be strong candidates for one of the two automatic berths if they see off the sixth club, Barnsley.

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## FA's push for rule change

## Football

NICK DUXBURY

The Football Association is spearheading a move to allow referees who play the advantage rule to change their mind if the advantage does not materialise.

The game's international rule-making body, the International Football Association Board, is to vote on the idea at its annual meeting in Rio de Janeiro on 9 March.

The FA wants to give referees the chance to go back and award a free-kick if the team benefiting from the advantage rule subsequently lose possession.

They believe it would allow more flexibility - and it could be implemented next season. An official of the game's international governing body, Fifa, said the main problem would be to decide how long referees could wait before deciding whether the team had gained an advantage.

The board will also vote on a move to allow three substitutions and a total of seven players on the bench during all official competition matches. Other proposals formally recognising that it is the linesman's role to signal offside and off-the-ball incidents. Any proposals passed will be introduced on 1 July.

Fifa will also discuss measures to increase the proportion of playing time.

## Hoddle's move for Wright rejected

Glenn Hoddle's phone call to Arsenal asking for Ian Wright's home number met with a unequivocal rebuff from Bruce Rioch. "I told him that Ian is not on the transfer list and is not for sale," the Arsenal manager said.

Hoddle's interest in taking the Gunners striker and Highbury idol to Chelsea for £2.5m had been aroused by press speculation that Wright's first-team place might not be secure, with Rioch having reportedly been to France to run his eye over Patrice Loko, the Paris St-Germain forward. A scouting outing that Rioch yesterday denied had taken place.

Wright has escaped with a censure by the Football Association over his "little Hitler" comment about the referee. Rioch was "delighted" at the outcome but added the rider that "it's down to Ian as far as discipline is concerned. I think we have seen Cantona address the problem very well to date."

Kevin Keegan, who has been keeping a low profile in advance of Monday's meeting with Manchester United, yesterday broke cover to defend Faustino Asprilla and attack television's role in disciplinary matters. The Newcastle manager,

speaking for the first time since his £7.5m signing was charged with two counts of misconduct following the game against Manchester City, said that trial by television was "a very dangerous road" to go down.

"If it's happening to every other team then that's fine," he said. "But it's not fine if one or two teams are going to be involved, especially as the chances are that it is the top teams which are going to be shown more on television."

As for Asprilla, Keegan will be standing by his man. "After all I'm the guy who went out there and signed him," he said. Regi Blinker, the Dutch international winger, has agreed a three-and-a-half year contract with Sheffield Wednesday. Blinker, 26, is rated at around £1m by Wednesday, who are now ironing out the financial details with Feyenoord.

Steve Claridge finally completed a £1.2m move to Leicester, complaining that he "wouldn't treat my dog the way I have been treated" by the Birmingham manager, Barry Fry. The Claridge cash did not stay long in Blues' coffers, with Fry spending £500,000 on Andy Legg and Paul Devlin from Notts County.

Southend have signed the Dutch striker Jeron Boere from Crystal Palace for £150,000.

## Team news

## TODAY

**Coventry v West Ham**  
Coventry will have Brown and Williams back after suspension, while West Ham's defence is likely to be shaky. Ian Wright is not on the transfer list and is not for sale.

**Leeds v Bolton**  
Bolton may replace Mearns in the Leeds starting line-up while defenders Briggs, Johnson (injured) and Persson (out) are ruled out and Kelly (injured) is doubtful. Go, Riedle, and Westinghouse should keep their places.

**Manchester City v Blackburn**  
City have Filizola and Portillo available after suspension. Blackburn's defence is likely to be shaky. Ian Wright is not on the transfer list and is not for sale.

**Sheff Wed v Notts County**  
Sheff Wed have signed Steve Claridge for £1.2m. Notts County have signed Barry Fry for £500,000.

**Southend v Crystal Palace**  
Southend have signed the Dutch striker Jeron Boere from Crystal Palace for £150,000.

**Stoke v Barnsley**  
Stoke, in fifth place despite restrictions on Lou Macari's spending power, will also be strong candidates for one of the two automatic berths if they see off the sixth club, Barnsley.

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## They'll put three in their own net in the last five minutes

They did it again. Lost 3-1 at Wimbledon in the fifth-round replay, running their best showing in the FA Cup for 25 years. Correct me if I'm wrong: 25 years ago, weren't Wimbledon a youth team in the Spud-U-Like League Third Division South?

I drink out of the lucky mug all week, touch the team calendar every Saturday, rub the common-vintage plate ("Second Division Play-Off Winners 1997 - Back in the Big Time") and still they fail me. In the first match we were 2-1 up in the third minute of injury time, and we still let them equalise.

Alan Hansen even said it was our fault. We're on *Match of the Day* for the first time in donkey's years, and while it's "plucky" Preston or "hard-done-by" Hartlepool, we're "naïve" - a point he rams home by showing 133 clips of naïve play by a team 2-1 up with no time left on the clock.

They've been doing this my entire life. Ever since my mum took me to see them play Manchester United in 1971, they have consistently failed me. She wanted to see George Best, and see him she did, waiting merrily around our leaden-footed defenders.

Someone should have taken me to one side and said: "Son, don't waste your life with this mob. They'll lead you on, give you a whiff of success and then put three in their own net in the last five minutes."

But I wouldn't be told. Autoglass Trophy Final 1994, first time at Wembley since before the war, the entire town in London to see them, and they lose, on penalties, to Swansea.

Why? I drank out of the mug. I bloody did. That's how... Here's a question. What team has come from behind by the biggest margin to win a League game? Answer: Charlton Athletic, 6-1 down at Huddersfield, where else, with 20 minutes to go. Result? 7-6 to Charlton. This was in the 1950s - I wasn't even born, you buffoons. How could I have touched the lucky plate?

But Huddersfield are challenging for promotion to the Premiership now, and we even have a fancy new stadium, do we not? Well, yes, but we're not fooled. Promotion last season was won by playing Neil Warnock long-ball ping-pong, we're not big fans of that in Huddersfield, where we like to think of ourselves as skilled artists.

And the stadium... Building of the Year in 1995, but we can't even do that right, because until they finish the far end, all the visiting fans get to taunt us with chants of: "Three stands, you've only got three stands." Maybe, just maybe, the new manager Brian Horton is going to change all our lives. He's taught some of the players not to kick the ball quite so high, and he's even turned down serious money for our top scorer, Andy Booth. Alas, when there is some nifty one-two footwork, there are still too many of the team peering



## A high-contrast, black and white photograph showing a person in a dark, hooded jacket and gloves crouching over a small, light-colored animal, possibly a dog, in a dark, textured environment. The person's face is obscured by the hood, and their hands are positioned near the animal. The background is dark and grainy, with some vertical lines visible on the right side.

Photograph: Allsport

**Quarter-finals**  
 9 Mar: 1st Group A v 4th Group B (at stadium, Farsipet, Pakistan); 3rd Group A v 2nd Group B (at M Chinnasekary stadium, Bangalore, India).  
 11 Mar: 4th Group A v 1st Group B (at stadium, Farsipet, Pakistan); 2nd Group A v 3rd Group B (at stadium, Farsipet, Pakistan).







all know that organisations stink: from the head down. There is not much someone half-way down the operation (where *Carling* and *Atherton* now find themselves) can do. But there are those who – through hard work and goodwill – that keep a creative enterprise afloat if their leaders show such disloyalty to your colleagues. If *Atherton* and *Carling* were free to make decisions that matter, instead of being saddled with cack-handed managers, their present predicament would be less dire than it is.

In the meantime, they can but reflect on the celebratory plaudits that can come a leader's way if he gets it right. How does that version of "Wonderwall" sung by Manchester City fans go again? "You and I, you can't have had Richard Mouldy... But any day now, you got Alan Ball."

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## SPORT

## ONE OF FOOTBALL'S GOOD GUYS

Glenn Moore on Peter Beardsley, Newcastle's smiling survivor Page 24

FIVE NATIONS' CHAMPIONSHIP: Scottish nation poised for its team to right past slights and win the Grand Slam

## Burden of history confronts England

## Rugby Union

STEVE BALE  
reports from Edinburgh

To be an England rugby player here in Scotland just now is to appreciate the weight of a history that has nothing to do with a 125-year-old rivalry and not that much to do either with the Scots' brave tilt at a fourth Grand Slam. Rather, we are talking about the baggage of centuries.

Insensitive as it may seem to say so, this afternoon's climactic Five Nations match between Rob Wainwright's and Will Carling's teams can quite clearly be seen as the modern, marginally more benign equivalent of Charles Edward Stuart and the Duke of Cumberland. Why, no sooner had I boarded my taxi yesterday than the driver was going on about 1745.

"I think it will make the Scottish nation very happy if we win," Wainwright understated. "But I'm not sure if there are any political implications." This is an appropriately diplomatic line from an officer (and doctor) in the British army but he has to be kidding.

Now that he is here, Jack Rowell really knows what he means when he laments how difficult such matches are. "They're about more than rugby" is one of the manager's repeated lines - are for England. Not so much international matches as international incidents, they can be made to make up for the slights, real or imagined, of the ages.

So it is undeniably tense in Edinburgh and England's prospects depend on how creatively they use that tension. This has been the difference between their play and that of Scotland this season. The Scots have flourished specifically by playing rugby on the very edge, where the risks are greatest: the English have been absolutely

unable to move beyond the mundane even when the risks are lowest.

With the recall of Dean Richards, the risks become lower still and, whether the world's most-capped No 8 knows it or not, he has in effect been handed personal responsibility for making England perform coherently and as a team.

Not that one Englishman can possibly hold England's fate even in hands as large as Richards', since this season's shorts mings have been general as well as specific. Man for man, a persuasive case could be stated in favour of most of the England players over their Scottish counterparts but the action about the whole adding up to more than the sum of its parts can be applied only to the Scots.

That said, Jim Telfer declines to accept the notion that his team's victories over Ireland, France and Wales should make them favourites, the cryptic Scottish manager preferring to concentrate on Scotland's six consecutive defeats by England since 1990. It is a ploy: the main task this week for Richard Cox, the Scots' team psychologist, has been not to build the players up but to deal with the phenomenal anticipation of their own populace.

England have also summoned their "Shrink", as they call him, to Edinburgh, though Austin Swain's role has to be more about dispelling anxiety. Anyway, the only psychology Dean Richards needs is the sight of a dark-blue jersey: injured at the time of the 1990 Grand Slam misadventure, he has never lost to the Scots.

If England perform collectively in accordance with their



Throwing in their lot: Scotland's forwards finish their match preparation with some line-out work yesterday

Photograph: David Ashdown

individual abilities, it is safe to predict Richards will extend his run to seven matches - and, given his apparent influence on others as well as his own contribution, it is a more likely eventuality than it would have been without him. But it will remain a heavy conditional until we see evidence that the English players' diminished confidence is at last returning.

Indeed, if Richards is to be the man to effect this change, England will have to hope they find a way to deconstruct the Scots, because not withstanding his re-

newed status as rugby superman the pack leader's impact on a game can be decisively reduced when the opposition succeed in pulling England all over field.

This was demonstrated not only by the World Cup semi-final against New Zealand that caused Richards' subsequent exclusion but also by a less well-remembered antipodean Test, against Australia in Sydney in 1991, when England had also been done for pace. Remarkably, it was the last time Richards had been on a losing England side before that All Blacks match.

So Richards, and by extension England, are bound to struggle if Scotland gain an exploitable share of possession, and that in turn places the onus on Garath

Archer, the new England lock, to secure the steady supply the discarded Martin Bayfield failed to secure against France and Wales. However prodigious Archer's talent, it is asking a lot, quite possibly too much.

Especially, that is, when you are confronted on your debut not only with 15 opponents nor even the vast majority among 67,000 spectators. The Bruce, the latest Scottish blockbuster with an anti-English theme, premiered in Aberdeen last night and comes to Edinburgh tonight, and Scots would like to see it as a perfectly timed metaphor for Murrayfield. It was Robert the Bruce who fought the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314 and Scotland got a result in that one, too.

SCOTLAND v ENGLAND			
at Murrayfield			
R. Shepherd	15	M. Catt	15
C. Joiner	16	J. Stirling	16
S. Hastings	17	W. Carling	17
I. Jardine	18	J. Guscott	18
M. Dods	19	R. Underwood	19
G. Townsend	20	P. Grayson	20
S. Redpath	21	M. Rees	21
D. Hilton	22	G. Rowntree	22
K. McKenna	23	M. Rees	23
S. Campbell	24	J. Leonard	24
G. Well	25	S. Arthur	25
R. Wainwright	26	B. Clark	26
E. Peters	27	D. Richards	27
I. Smith	28	I. Dellaglio	28

Replacements: 18 C. Glasgow (Wales), 17 F. C. Chalmers (Scotland), 16 G. Armstrong (Wales), 15 S. Murray (Edinburgh), 14 P. Burns (London), 13 J. P. Jones (Wales), 12 J. P. Jones (Wales), 11 J. P. Jones (Wales), 10 J. P. Jones (Wales), 9 J. P. Jones (Wales), 8 J. P. Jones (Wales), 7 J. P. Jones (Wales), 6 J. P. Jones (Wales), 5 J. P. Jones (Wales), 4 J. P. Jones (Wales), 3 J. P. Jones (Wales), 2 J. P. Jones (Wales), 1 J. P. Jones (Wales).

## Richardson set to pay for West Indies 'shame'

## Cricket

TONY COZIER  
reports from Bridgetown, Barbados

Two daily newspapers, the *Nation* and the *Advocate*, found the same damning word for their sizeable front-page headlines yesterday. "Shame", they agreed, best summed up the West Indies loss to Kenya in the World Cup in India on Thursday. Callers who inundated radio phone-in programmes found generally

more colourful adjectives to express their anger at the team's performance and the *Trinidad Express* saw the defeat by one of the minnows of world cricket, in their first international tournament, as no less than "a surrender of West Indian manhood".

At the coincidental meeting of heads of government in Guyana, Prime Minister Edson James of Dominica insisted that the whole state of West Indies' cricket be urgently added to the pressing political items on the agenda.

As the one sport at which the small former British colonies have excelled and the only one

in which they compete as a single team, cricket is followed with a passionate zeal throughout the English-speaking Caribbean.

An entire generation has grown up basking in the reflected glory of triumphs in the first two World Cups and 15 years of invincibility in Test cricket that only ended last May with defeat in a home series by Australia.

Since then the decline has been steady, with reversals in one-day tournaments in England, Sharjah and Australia and the people, and the players, have found it difficult coming to terms with the shift in fortunes.

Humiliation by a bunch of weekend club cricketers from a country with no background in the game has left those who stayed through the night to watch the live TV coverage disbelieving and disgruntled - and almost universally calling for the head of the captain, Richie Richardson.

Richardson, who succeeded Viv Richards in 1991, has come under heavy criticism as his team has faltered; this could be the last straw. Former players, Richards among them, have blamed his inability to check the slide and the vast vocal majority have long demanded his replacement.

The calls have now become more strident and it is difficult to imagine the 33-year-old Antiguan surviving Tuesday's meeting of the West Indies Cricket Board of Control that will choose the captain for the home series against New Zealand that immediately follows the World Cup.

"Richie Richardson is the man who must ultimately pay the price and his resignation must now be properly offered to the Board in a timely manner," the *Barbados Nation* wrote in its editorial yesterday.

Richardson has made it plain, yet again, that he intends

to "hang in there" so that he will have to be pushed.

Brian Lara has been groomed for the position since he was a teenager but recent withdrawals from the team revealed a temperamental side likely to deter those who decide the issue. A more logical choice, albeit in the short term, is Courtney Walsh, the wily 33-year-old fast bowler, who captains Gloucestershire. But whoever leads the team in future, the day Kenya defeated the West Indies will always be remembered with indignation in this part of the world.

World Cup cricket, page 25

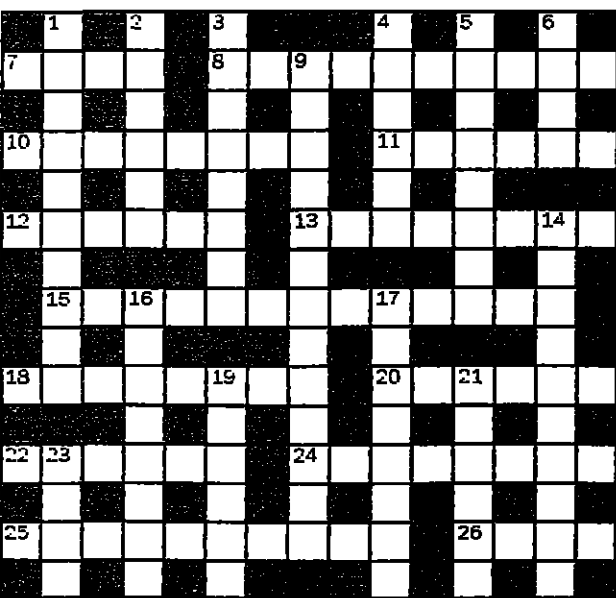
## THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 2924, Saturday 2 March

By Mass

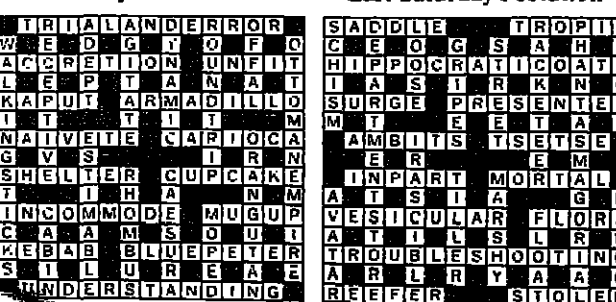
ACROSS

DOWN



Friday's solution

Last Saturday's solution



- 7 Union strike over nothing (4)  
8 One in major British store - one involved with orders? (10)  
10 Adult inside, reportedly a yes-man (8)  
11 Code's last short cipher - and that's it (6)  
12 Skip? I stick around North (6)  
13 Perturb one on the bench (8)  
15 Norman language? (5,6)  
18 End lyric after pounding drum (8)  
20 Note sharp character outside breaking in (6)  
22 Magic circles led by goon (6)  
24 In report, new man I recommend (8)  
25 I'm inhibited without money, that's the snag (10)  
26 A whip to make you yield (4)

- 1 It helps one get through income, like wages rashly invested (10)  
2 Blade's jabbed in also (6)  
3 Animals with trunks feeding on stunted plant (8)  
4 A former queen's outspoken devotee? (6)  
5 Led Spade finally, made points (about last in contract) (8)  
6 Time-consuming, finding name in record (4)  
9 One certainly gets around (11)  
14 Bonding of layers needs paste, I state (10)  
16 Control sound of pet animal (8)  
17 Friendly hint (8)  
19 Call to quit the bar is heard (4,2)  
21 Intimidate bridge players in club (6)  
23 Some shockers in the navy? (4)

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hardbacked copies of the Larousse Dictionary of Literary Characters. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 2018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5BL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: Mrs G.J. Lipovits, Lichfield; Mr R. Davies, Newport; Roy Smith, Warrington; Eric Road, Warley; Pamela Playle-Mitchell, Lancaster.

## Injured top jockeys to miss Cheltenham

## Racing

GREG WOOD

Norman Williamson and Adrian Maguire, two of the country's top jump jockeys, will miss the Cheltenham Festival after suffering injuries yesterday. Williamson dislocated his right shoulder - his third serious injury in an ill-starred season - on the gallops yesterday morning, while Maguire broke his right collar-bone in a fall at Newbury a few hours later.

Maguire, who also missed last year's Festival following the death of his mother, was due to partner Viking Flagship and Zabadi, favourites for the Champion Chase and Triumph Hurdle respectively, at the three-day meeting which opens a week on Tuesday.

Williamson, who completed the Gold Cup/Champion Hurdle double on Master Oats and Alderbrook 12 months ago, would have gone to Cheltenham with every chance of doing so again.

Williamson's shoulder had previously been dislocated in a fall at Newbury three weeks ago during his first ride in Britain since breaking his leg at Sedgfield in October. The shoulder must now be operated on and

he seems sure to miss the remainder of the season. Maguire, though, will hope to return in time for the Grand National meeting at Aintree, which begins on 28 March.

Maguire's injury occurred at the water jump when his mount, Smiling Chief, slipped on landing and fired him into the turf as well as bringing down two following horses. He lay on the ground for several minutes before being helped to an ambulance, grasping his shoulder. At the Princess Margaret Hospital in Swindon, X-rays confirmed that his collar-bone was broken.

With 10 days to go to the festival, the search for replacements began immediately. Richard Dunwoody, the champion jockey may come in for the ride on Alderbrook; if other commitments permit, while Charlie Swan is expected to take over on Viking Flagship, Jamie Osborne is likely to partner Master Oats, while Tony McCoy, Dunwoody's heir apparent, may also pick up some prime rides.

Racing, page 23

## TORONTO WITH NIAGARA

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